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Sacramental addresses and
meditations

SACRAMENTAL ADDRESSES

AND

SERMONS.



SACRAMENTAL
ADDRESSES

AND
MEDITATIONS,
WITH
A FEW SERMONS INTERSPERSED.

BY THE
REV. HENRY BELFRAGE,
MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL IN FALKIRK.

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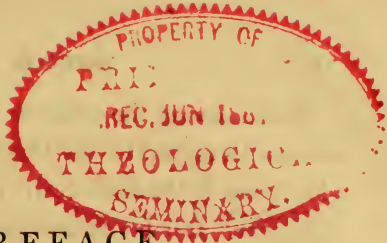
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P R E F A C E.

THE favourable reception given to the SACRAMENTAL ADDRESSES AND MEDITATIONS, published by the Author some years ago, has encouraged him to prepare a Second Volume, and to offer it to the Public. It was his wish to frame these now presented in such a way as to fit them for the general edification of Christians, as well as to direct and to impress them in the observance of the Lord's Supper; and for this purpose, he has enlarged many of them, by adding various explanatory remarks and practical exhortations. He has taken a wide range of topics, not only to give variety to the work, but to lead his readers to trace the connexion of the death of Christ with the other articles of our religion, and to bring the pious feelings and resolutions which are excited by them to the Communion Table.

The Sermons which are interspersed, will be found, he hopes, to accord with the spirit of the work, and to have some tendency to promote its great object.

Remembering the gracious promise of the Saviour with regard to the Comforter,—“ He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you,” it is his earnest prayer that the Holy Ghost may exhibit the beauties of Christ’s character, and the wonders of his death to every reader—may form in them the spirit, and impart to them the blessings of the cross: And if these Meditations are blessed for leading any to the knowledge of Christ crucified, as the wisdom of God, and the power of God, for animating languid piety, comforting those that mourn, and promoting holy obedience, he will rejoice in the day of the Lord that he has not laboured in vain.

FALKIRK, *Dec. 1, 1821.*

SUBJECTS OF THE ADDRESSES AND SERMONS.

ADDRESS	Page
1. The God of Bethel,	Genesis xxxi. 13. 1
2. Ruth's Choice,	Ruth i. 16, 17. 7
3. Christ's engaging to be a sacrifice for us,	Psalm xl. 6, 7, 8. 15
4. David's lamentation over Jonathan,	2 Samuel i. 26. 21
5. The love of Christ preferred to the best earthly comforts,	Song i. 4. 28

SERM. I. The first promise illustrated, Genesis iii. 15. 37

ADDRESS

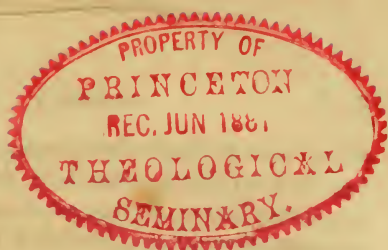
6. The first promise applied,	Genesis iii. 15. 54
7. The harmony of mercy and justice in our redemption,	Psalm lxxxv. 10. 58
8. The Ministry of our Lord,	Luke iv. 18, 19. 66
9. Christ's kingly glory ridiculed,	John xix. 5. 73
10. The place of our Lord's crucifixion,	John xix. 17, 18. 80
11. The dividing of our Lord's gar- ments,	John xix. 23, 24. 86

SERM. II. Our Lord forsaken by his
Father, Matthew xxvii. 46. 93

ADDRESS

12. The desertion of Christ applied,	Matthew xxvii. 46. 109
13. The resurrection at the death of Jesus,	Matt. xxvii. 52, 53. 113
14. Christ's legacy of peace,	John xiv. 27 121
15. Glory to the righteous,	Isaiah xxiv. 16. 128
16. The plant of renown,	Ezekiel xxxiv. 29. 135
17. Christ wounded in the house of his friends,	Zechariah xiii. 6 142
18. The bread of life,	John vi. 34. 150

	Page
SERM. III. The birth of Christ announced,	Luke ii. 10, 11. 158
ADDRESS	
19. The birth of Christ improved,	Luke ii. 10, 11. 173
20. The end of Christ's coming,	John x. 10. 177
21. The evidences of communion,	Acts iv. 13. 184
22. The water of life,	John vii. 37. 191
23. God's love commended,	Romans v. 7, 8. 200
24. The earthquake at Christ's death,	Matthew xxvii. 51. 209
25. The Centurion's testimony,	Mark xv. 39. 215
26. Christ's side pierced,	John xix. 34. 224
SERM. IV. The conference during the Transfiguration,	Luke ix. 30, 31. 231
ADDRESS	
27. The death of Christ worthy of all honour,	Luke ix. 30, 31. 251
28. Christ's weeping at the grave of Lazarus,	John xi. 35. 255
29. Christ's weeping over Jerusalem,	Luke xix. 41, 42. 263
30. Christ's exercise in his agony,	Hebrews v. 7. 272
31. Living to Christ,	Philippians i. 21. 281
32. The Prince's presence with his church,	Ezekiel xlvi. 10. 287
SERM. V. The ascension notified,	John xx. 17. 295
ADDRESS	
33. Mary's privilege at the sepulchre,	Jo. xx. 11, 12, 16, 17. 312
34. The wonders of adopting love,	1 John iii. 1. 316
35. Love to an unseen Saviour,	1 Peter i. 8. 324
36. Rejoicing in Christ,	1 Peter i. 8. 332
37. Christ's last prayer,	Luke xxiii. 46. 341
38. The seeking of Christ encouraged,	Matthew xxviii. 5. 348
39. Christ a deliverer from the wrath to come,	1 Thess. i. 10. 355
40. The apostolic benediction,	2 Corinth. xiii. 14. 362
SERM. VI. Unitarianism a perversion of the gospel,	Galatians i. 7. 369



SACRAMENTAL

ADDRESSES AND MEDITATIONS.

ADDRESS I.

GENESIS xxxi. 13.

“ I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me : now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred.”

How amazing is it that Jehovah should speak thus of any spot of this earth ? The heavens are his with all their host, the earth in all its glory is only his footstool, yet he describes himself as the God of Bethel. The spot thus honoured, was neither adorned by that pomp of kings, nor signalised by those trophies of war which attract to particular scenes the curiosity, or the veneration of men, but was wild and solitary, yet Jehovah viewed it with delight, as the place where he had manifested his glory to a heart that loved him, and speaks of it in a manner which sweetly indicates this complacency, and points out his readiness to favour his people in all ages and places with similar communications.

There is no place too wild and lonely to be the scene of fellowship with God ; nay, the more bleak and sequestered it is, the more does he manifest his goodness in exciting in it religious joy. It was the consciousness

of this which made the Psalmist say, "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or flee from thy presence; if I ascend into heaven, lo, thou art there: If I make my bed in hell thou art also there, and if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the outermost parts of the sea, even there should thy right hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." While John was in Patmos, an outcast from society, and far from the friends and the work he loved, he was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and had the brightest prospects of the triumphs of the Gospel, and of the glory of the Lamb opened to his view.

And if God holds communion with his people in such places, they have much more reason to expect it in the ordinances where his name is recorded, and his presence is promised. It is on this account that he is called the God of Sion, because in its various rites of worship his glory is displayed, and his grace is imparted. In the preaching of his word he sends forth his light and his truth; in the sacrament of baptism he pours out his spirit and his blessing, and in the Lord's Supper, the bread and the wine are the communion of his body and blood. It is with the graces of his people that he holds fellowship—to their faith he unveils his glory—to their love he displays his beauty—to their gratitude he unfolds his blessings, and to their hope he reveals the destined inheritance. You are now longing for communion with God, and saying, "Oh, when wilt thou come unto me," and I trust he will visit you with his sweet mercy, and cause you to say, "We behold his glory full of grace and truth."

In the vision at Bethel, there was a scene exhibited which suggests the most interesting meditations at the communion table. A ladder was seen reaching from earth to heaven, and Jehovah stood at the top of it.

This was an emblem of that restoration of our intercourse with God, which has been effected by the mediation of Christ. We by nature are enemies to God, labour under the effects of his displeasure, and have reason to fear more tremendous consequences of it in a future world ; and no intelligence can be so delightful as this, that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. He now speaks to us with the voice of love, and welcomes our return to Him with a father's smile. Our condition is very different from that of heathens, who were left in the most distracting uncertainty on this point, and were rendered miserable amidst their costliest oblations, by their fears that their rites and their sacrifices were vain, for we can joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation. The believer in the atonement may regard the character of God under the softest images of tenderness and peace, and can rejoice that at his throne he hath no condemnation to fear, and that in his darkest cloud there is no bolt to destroy. Such contemplations have excited the liveliest gratitude to Him who submitted so promptly to be "made a curse for us," and with such sacred feelings may your hearts now glow to the generous Mediator between God and man. And it becomes you to cherish fervid gratitude to that God who devoted the Son of his love to suffer and to die, to save you from destruction. This love is infinite ; this gift is unspeakable, and they claim our everlasting wonder and praise.

Such were the views which Jacob had at Bethel, and such are the objects which are more fully presented to you in the cross. Now God says to you, "I am the God of Calvary, where Jesus suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring you to God," and let your faith and love, your gratitude and joy, now re-

ply, " O Lord I will praise ; thee though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me. Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song, and he also is become my salvation."

After the Service.

It was at Bethel that Jacob took the stone which had been his pillow, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil on the top of it ; and it was here that he vowed a vow, saying, " If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God, and this stone which I have set for a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee." This memorial was simple, but God regarded it with delight, as the expression of grateful homage, and this vow was recorded in his book of remembrance. It is not of a splendid temple, or of a magnificent ceremony that God thus speaks, but of a rude and lowly pillar, and of a vow made in utter solitude. Superstition hath boasted of the majesty of the columns it has reared to his name, and of the sublimity of the hymns it hath sung in his praise ; but to all its structures He prefers the rudest pillar which gratitude erects, and on which the tear of repentance falls, and to all its pealing anthems, the holy wish, and the virtuous purpose of the renovated heart.

Ye young disciples, let this be the vow you now make at his table, that your heart shall be his. The sweetest sound which can rise from earth to heaven is the vow of early piety : " He is my God, and I will exalt him, my father's God, and I will prepare him a habi-

tation." The witness and the record of this vow are on high, and you will be reminded of it hereafter to your shame, or to your joy;—to your shame, if it is forgotten and violated—to your joy, if you have kept the faith.

Ye who are in middle life, devote to him your active days. Others at this period are devoting the prime of their faculties to worldly wealth, and to worldly ambition; but we trust you are now dedicating, and will hereafter direct yours to the service of God. Piety will lighten all your cares, guide all your steps, and sanctify all your engagements.

And let aged disciples devote to God what may remain of life. God is now reminding you of the solemnities of your early days, and of the purposes which you formed in them, and which he hath kept you from disregarding, and while he does so, consecrate the evening of life to the remembrance of his name, and the declaring of his works; yea, this day make your vow for eternity, and ere you rise from that table, let this be your resolution: "I will extol thee my God, O king; every day will I do it, and I will bless thy name for ever and ever." It becomes you to show both to God and to the world, that instead of finding reason to complain of his dispensations, or to become languid in his service, you feel yourselves more strongly bound than ever to keep his commandments and to abide in his love.

You are now on the brink of the grave, and it becomes you to set up your stone of memorial on that spot, and to inscribe on it the affecting expression of gratitude, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped." And you may be assured, that the God who hath blessed by his mercy all the former periods of your life, will not leave you comfortless now. He will refresh you, when weary, with the dew of your youth, and with the first fruits of paradise.

To all of you God is saying, " Arise, get thee out of this land, and return to the land of thy kindred." While you remain in the world, let your affections be set on things above; and when the hour of your departure shall arrive, go without reluctance and without dismay to the house of your father. This world is a strange land to you; you have another spirit than that of its children, and you regard its follies with contempt, and its pollutions with abhorrence. Its fairest attractions have lost their power over your hearts; for you have seen and felt their vanity, and you have found in the scenes which seemed most innocent and safe, temptations perilous to your virtue, and sorrows which wounded your hearts. But the better country is the land of your kindred, and your best friends are there. If you have friends on earth who are unwilling to part with you, and with regard to whom it is painful to you to think that your death will be to them a grievous loss, reflect that you have friends in heaven longing for your arrival, that the Friend whom you value supremely, is praying that you may be with him to behold his glory, and that your helpless and sorrowing relatives will find in him strength and consolation which no human heart or hand could ever have yielded.

In that land of your kindred no absence shall interrupt your intercourse, nor shall it ever be embittered by any evil passion, or by any disastrous incident. The spirits of the just will acknowledge you as their brethren, and the friends whose departure made this world to you a dreary land, under whose burdens they can no longer assist you, and from whose evils they can no longer protect you, shall meet you in heaven in perfect love, and feel in their first embrace the blessed assurance, " we shall never part more." And the time will come when your dead bodies shall arise, and, united again to their spirits, shall dwell for ever in that

land of the living where every countenance is that of a friend, where every song is salvation, and where every feeling is pure and happy.

ADDRESS II.

RUTH i. 16, 17.

“Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.”

THESE words express the choice you have made, and the holy purposes which you have formed, and which you are now to renew in partaking of the symbols of the body and the blood of the Lord. Ruth had been made acquainted with the character and laws of the God of Israel, during her connexion with the son of Naomi; and though she had no prospect but that of poverty in a strange land, she determined to live and to die among the true worshippers of Jehovah. Her resolution breathes the spirit of “an Israelite indeed,” and the choice she here expresses is marked by various characters which may assist you in examining the nature of your attachment to religion, and may animate you to cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart.

This choice is full and unlimited. The God of Israel is the object of her choice, as the Lord whom she was willing to serve, and the God whose blessing could alone render her happy. His people she chooses as her companions, and in every path which they tread she resolves to accompany them. And have you made

an unreserved choice of Jesus and his ways? If we are willing to take the Lord for our portion, but will not submit to Him as our Sovereign; if we are disposed to associate only with those of the saints who are high in station, and if there are parts of duty which we cannot be brought to practise without the utmost reluctance, and which we avail ourselves of every pretext to shun, we are strangers to the spirit of genuine piety. Whatever bears the traces of God's image it loves, and to all that is stamped with his authority it bows.

There are some objects and scenes in religion which may appear more attracting than others; but there is none which the pious heart does not love, there is no service which it seeks to avoid, and no requirement which it wishes expunged or mitigated. And are you now saying "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" To me thy whole will is sacred and dear. Whatever it calls me to perform, I will attempt, and whatever it requires me to suffer, I will bear. There is something peculiarly delightful to a pious mind in obeying the severest requirements of religion, from the consciousness which is felt of our thus proving the power of our attachment to those whom we love above all, and from that divine strength and comfort which is always proportioned to the difficulties of our condition and duty.

This choice is affectionate. The language of Ruth is not that of carelessness, or of dissimulation, but we see in it all the eagerness and fervour of holy love. And the choice which the pious soul makes of religion is not like that of the formalist, who yields to it only bodily service, and who feels, amidst his professions of complacency, that it is an irksome task; but it is the dictate of enlightened and supreme affection. It is an indignity to religion to take hold of it with an averted

look, or with a reluctant sigh. The pious soul has seen the divine excellence and beauty in such a light as fills it with rapturous admiration, and to possess the image of such a being appears the brightest glory of its nature, and to have an interest in his regard seems the summit of its happiness, both for time and for eternity. The pious soul sees something to charm it in the meanest dwellings of the good, for God is there; in their most dreary and rugged paths, for the way of the Lord is strength to the upright; and in their death, however agonizing, for the latter end of the perfect man is peace.

This choice was determined. "I am a stranger," as if she had said, "to the covenants of promise; but though God should slay me, yet will I trust in him. I am an alien to the commonwealth of Israel; but though they should frown upon me, I will cleave to them. The journey may be tedious and exhausting, through want of necessary support, and from the difficulties and the dreariness of the path; yet I will accompany them. Thy habitation may be poor and comfortless, yet it shall be my rest; and though thy grave shall be far from the burying place of my fathers, in it shall my body be laid. I have considered the matter in every form, and I cannot leave thee."

Is your choice of religion as determined? If it is made in any other spirit than this, it will not abide the jest of the scorner, the solicitation of corrupt passions, nor the afflictions of the Gospel. The jest of the scorner will make you ashamed to avow it, or to act up to it; the sophistry of vice will strengthen the impressions which made you hesitate; and under the reproach of Christ, you will go back, and walk no more with him. If it is made under the influence of the spirit of power and of love, none of these things will

move you ; and as your Saviour undertook your cause, and fulfilled all his engagements, with a firmness which no threats could shake, and a constancy which no agonies could subdue, let the same mind be in you which was also in him, and add to your faith fortitude.

This choice is final. It is made for life. Its spirit is this, " I may be solicited to serve other gods, but this God is my God for ever. Nature may raise a sigh for mine own people, and my father's house, but the joys of religious fellowship I will not forego ; and even when thine eyes are closed, and I am left alone, I will neither quit the land nor the worship of Israel ; I will die in thy hope, and I will sleep in thy grave."

The choice we make of God and his ways is not for a season. Some are serious only in the time of affliction ; they will then solicit the counsels and prayers of the pious, and declare their purpose to be holy ; but returning health effaces these impressions, and they consider them as a weakness of which they may be ashamed. The enthusiast, whose affections are kindled into a fierce and momentary blaze, makes loud professions, and urges his plans with great vehemence, but he soon falls away. But the pious man stands fast in the Lord, and there is not a scene of his life, nor a moment of his being, in which he would consider himself safe without the influence, or happy without the comforts of religion. He will have no other Saviour than Jesus, and no other course than moral goodness ; and his language is, " till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me ; my righteousness I hold fast, and I will not let it go ; my heart shall not reproach me so long as I shall live." The God of Israel may leave him to walk in darkness, yet will he wait on him ; his people may be neglected and contemned by ungodly men, yet will not he abandon them ; if they are scat-

tered over deserts and mountains, he will wander with them ; if they lodge in dens and caves of the earth, there will he abide ; they may be buried in places deemed infamous by the world, yet there would he rather be laid to share the repose of the just, than in the most splendid receptacles of triumphant villany.

This choice of Ruth was made in spite of many discouragements. Her mother-in-law set before her all the difficulties she might expect, and she saw the widow of her husband's brother so influenced by the prospect as to abide in Moab ; yet was her purpose unshaken. You may perhaps have friends who are averse from religion, and neighbours disposed to ridicule rather than to follow your piety ; yet you must now say with Peter's zeal, " though all men should forsake thee, yet will not I." Beware lest you say it with the presumption which led him to disregard all admonition, and to brave temptation, but express it with a humble dependence on that grace which can confirm you to the end, and with an affectionate sense of your peculiar obligations to that Redeemer who loved you, and gave himself for you.

After the Service.

To her purpose Ruth adds a very solemn oath, to convince Naomi how firmly she was resolved to adhere to her, and to strengthen the pious resolutions of her own soul. Whatever might occur to disgust her in Judea, and whatever alluring messages might be sent to her to induce her to return to Moab, this would be her answer, " I have opened my mouth to the Lord, and I cannot go back." You have now been pledging yourselves by the most sacred vows to serve your Redeemer, and are, I trust, disposed to say, like the

Psalmist, "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments." The recollection of these vows will furnish you with an additional argument in answer to the solicitations of temptation, and they will be regarded by you as a restraint from folly, and as a motive to pious exertion, which the best require in the present state.

Ruth might be afraid that after the attractions of the land of Israel were no longer new to her, her affections might revert to her native country, to the scenes where her childhood sported, and her youth rejoiced, and where the objects were which first interested the heart. There is something in the abode where our infancy was cherished, and in the spot where the gay hours of early life were spent, which makes the heart to long for them though we are separated from them by thousands of miles, and though scores of years have elapsed since we quitted them. But the recollection of these vows would make Ruth bless God that he had brought her from a land of idols, and when she thought of her country, to bewail the gross darkness which covered it. If we are conscious that there are quarters where we are especially in danger from the influence of temptation, it will be wise to form a solemn purpose of peculiar watchfulness there; and if there are duties from which our hearts shrink, we must resolve to make every effort to discharge them fully. Dreadful is that hour in which conscience presents to us the vows we have violated, and they cannot be beheld without shame and consternation. At this moment your hearts are wrung with the recollection of your broken vows, which in the moments of sacred rapture you thought would never be infringed, and you are now trembling at the idea, which to you is most painful, that you may by the power of temptation be induced to disregard those

you have now made, to the dishonour of God, and to the detriment and peril of your souls; but commit yourselves to your Saviour's care, and while you do so, watch and pray that you enter not into temptation.

Let me call upon you to maintain the choice you have made, and have this day avowed. "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord," and no expression of my lips, no wish of my heart, and no action of my life, shall ever utter a different language. Beware of every thing which will make the sincerity of your choice of religion questionable. Engage not in the pursuits of the world with that devotedness to them which is incompatible with any of the claims of your holy profession: and let not the men of the world be your favourite associates. Say not, I make them so to do them good, for instead of benefiting them, they may contaminate you, they can have no kindred feelings with you, and the young and the simple may employ your example to encourage themselves in intimacies which will involve them in ruin.

Often call to your remembrance the examples of this choice, and of fidelity to it, which have been set before you. Ruth was bound to Moab by many ties, yet she breaks through them all, and says, "I am the Lord's." Moab might abhor her as a traitress to her country, and from the grave of her fathers she heard a voice to which the ear of nature never can be closed; yet all this could not shake her purpose to live and die with the worshippers of the true God. Think of Moses, who saw more to charm him in the trials of Israel than in the pleasures of Egypt, and in the reproach of Christ, than in the crown of Pharaoh. Nor was this a transient emotion of piety, for these impressions remained unchanged amidst all the perils of the wilderness, and all the ingratitude and perverseness of the

Jews ; and even while the displeasure of his God excluded him from Canaan, he blessed him that he was not shut out from heaven, and died in the land of Moab, in calm submission and joyful hope. Think of Paul, who counted all his privileges and distinctions loss for Christ, and who maintained this pious determination amidst unparalleled trials of his constancy, both as to number, severity, and duration. In prisons and stripes, in threats and abuse, in hunger and nakedness, at the bar and on the scaffold, he could say, "none of these things move me." Think of the pious friends who exhorted you to make this choice, who from the bed of death recommended it to you, and who having lived by the faith of the Son of God, and followed him in the graces of his character, left the world with such prospects, that you felt disposed to say, "let us go also, that we may die with them." Now we desire that every one of you do shew the same zeal and patience in supporting the credit, in fulfilling the duties, and in surmounting the difficulties, of your holy profession.

Consider the advantages which will result from your adherence to this choice ; you shall have the Ruler of the world for your friend, the God of all grace for your portion, the Father of glory for your reward, and God blessed for ever, for your felicity. Compared with such privileges the treasures of the world are emptiness, and the honours of princes vanity. You shall have the excellent of the earth for your brethren and your friends, your comforters and your guides. In walking with them, you shall be led in the path of life, and in dying with them, you shall share in the happiness which the voice of the Spirit thus declares, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, they rest from their labours, and their works follow them." To be buried with them, is to

sleep in Jesus as they do, nor shall death part you long. It will take you to the spirits of just men made perfect, and in a few years it will re-unite in glory those whom it had separated. Death parts, but it unites also; and there is more joy in the union, than there was sorrow in the separation. In a short time your soul shall be associated with those whose fervid devotion so often roused your languid piety, whose kind solicitude for your welfare secured your confidence, and stimulated your improvement; whose gentleness and candour taught you to be mild and charitable; and whose lofty and joyful hopes carried so frequently your hearts to heaven. Nor is this all, for the resurrection of the just shall be your resurrection, their mercy in judgment shall be your mercy, their home your home, their glory your glory, their worship your worship, and their felicity your felicity. *Amen.*

ADDRESS III.

PSALM XL. 6, 7, 8.

“Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire: mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.”

SACRIFICES were originally of divine institution, and were intended to answer the most important purposes. The sinner was taught by them the malignity and the desert of his sin, and they directed his views to that great oblation which, in the fulness of time, should for ever perfect them that are sanctified. Often had conscious guilt trembled, and faith lifted up its head by their

side, and the fire descending from heaven and consuming the victim, shewed that the offering was accepted, and that the contrite spirit might hope in God. But the period was now come when the blood of bullocks, of lambs, and of goats, should cease to flow from his altar, and when every eye should be turned from the temple and its rites, to the cross on Calvary. Long had Jehovah beheld them with abhorrence substituted in the place of devout affection, and of the moral virtues, and abused, to encourage the hope of impunity in sin; but now the anger of the Lord was to burst forth against these hypocrites in the subversion of their civil and religious institutions, and the Messiah was to appear to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; and to present an offering which, while it established the hope of forgiveness, should exhibit the most engaging pattern of piety and love, of meekness and constancy in suffering, whose influence should be felt in all the scenes of time, and whose efficacy should be extolled through all the ages of eternity. Jesus, knowing that such were the views and plans of his Father, and glorying in being chosen and called by him to offer such a sacrifice, says, "mine ears hast thou opened." Like the Jewish servants, he took such delight in his Master's work, that he pledges himself never to lay aside the form of a servant till he had accomplished the task assigned him. The Jewish servant who loved his master, and would not go out free, had only one ear bored, because he had only to labour for him, and was to be subjected to no suffering; but Jesus had to endure the penalty, as well as to obey the precept of the law. This was necessary to fulfil all righteousness, as well as to complete the redemption of his people. There was nought in all its curses that could extinguish, or even check his generous ardour, nor was there one

of its precepts which he counted it irksome or degrading for him to obey.

Having said to his Father, "Here am I, send me;" this accepted pledge Jesus was willing to redeem. "Then said I, lo, I come." This language points out the promptitude and seasonableness of his interposition for man. It was not postponed for a single instant beyond the destined period, and never did he discover the least symptom of hesitation. He came when long experience had demonstrated the utter insufficiency of every other oblation, and of every other hope, when superstition had ransacked all its stores for a suitable victim, and when philosophy had laboured in vain to devise an effectual expedient to dispel the guilty fears of man, and to renovate the moral and religious character of society. Jesus came, and no other; for no other was equal to the task. Of all the myriads of angels there was none that attempted it. We find not in Scripture the least intimation of any effort they ever made for the relief of those who were once their companions, and what they could not do for them, they could not accomplish for man. Jesus speaks as if he wished all the angels in heaven to mark his cheerful obedience to confirm them in subjection to God, and because in his coming there is matter for everlasting wonder. Be astonished, my soul, that he should come when so few were disposed to welcome him, and on a service so arduous and so painful. Rejoice, ye compassionate angels, he cries, who are sighing over the miseries of wretched mortals, I come to redeem the lost; and we cannot hear him utter this language without saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord to save us."

The Messiah declares, "In the volume of the book it is written of me," "I know all the predictions it has

uttered, and I am come to fulfil them ; all the hopes it has inspired, and will now realize them ; and all the sufferings it has marked out for me, and I will endure them." He was willing not merely to assume its bright characters of a Prince and a Conqueror, but even the humblest of its titles ; and submitted with cheerfulness to the task of a servant, and to the pangs of a sufferer. To be, and do, and suffer, what prophecy had marked out, and love anticipated, was his highest wish. He delighted to do God's will, and this pleasure was felt not merely in the distant prospect of obedience, but when he was actually engaged in it, and in the midst of his severest toils and dying agonies. How affectionate is the claim which he makes, " O my God !" and much did this tend to animate every exertion, and to alleviate all his pains. It was thus that he obtained for you the privilege of employing the language of appropriating faith, and taught us that the most acceptable season in which this can be made is when the heart is animated by holy zeal, and we are most active in our appointed duties. He adds, " and thy law is within my heart." Nothing could make him swerve from it, or keep it for a single moment from his view. In his soul there were no evil principles to oppose it, every affection accorded with its dictates, and its rectitude had the fullest approbation of his judgment, and the highest complacency of his heart. Can you say, in his spirit, " O how love I thy law !" Yea even the curse of the law entered into his soul in all the wrath which you deserved ; and to this he was willing to submit to redeem you from it. I trust, Christians, that you now feel a glowing impression of your Saviour's grace. O magnify his name for what he undertook, and for what he did for you ; and while you observe his dying command, may he seal this covenant with you, " I will put my laws in their minds,

and write them in their hearts ; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people."

After the Service.

Be grateful, Christians, for the generous love of your Saviour. It is common with men, when other means of relieving the wretched have been found vain, to say, " It is idle for me to attempt it ;" but the insufficiency of other methods of saving us, led to the expression of his determination to accomplish the mighty task, in which he shall shine with unrivalled glory for ever. Had he been coming to an admiring world, and to universal sway, his promptitude would not have been so surprising ; but he came to all the gloom of sorrow, and to all the bitterness of death, and to redeem those who deserved no pity, and who are insensible of what they owe to him till his grace makes them feel it. Beware of every false hope. If those ancient oblations were rejected as utterly insufficient to expiate the least sin, none of your sufferings or services can merit aught at the hand of God. You have now laid all your attainments at the Saviour's feet, but take heed lest, when the swell of devotional feeling has subsided, you be induced to put confidence in your own acquirements. Live in those humble impressions of your own character and conduct, which the contemplation of the cross awakens, and in which, from the bed of death, you will view the throne of judgment rising before you. Remember the assurances of fidelity you have now given to your Lord ; he has drawn you to himself with the cords of love, and let there not be among you one backslider in heart. He died in your cause, and you should die in his service. Jesus is a master who bears to his servants all a father's love, and " his yoke is easy, and his bur-

den is light." When he requires of you any service, you must engage in it with alacrity ; when he imposes any cross, you must glory in tribulation ; when he demands any of your comforts, your grasp must be instantly unloosed ; and when he calls you to heaven, you must not permit any worldly interest to retard you, nor any of the terrors of death to influence you to shrink.

Be well acquainted with all that is said in the volume of his book respecting your Lord. If the minutest particulars in the lives of those whose exploits, or whose crimes, have made them famous in the world, are recorded with care, and read with attention, you can never feel indifferent to aught that God hath made known respecting Him who is the brightness of glory. Every sacramental solemnity should increase your knowledge of the glories of his cross, and every affliction you experience of the fellowship of his sufferings. In looking into these things, you mingle in the studies of angels. Let it be your delight to do the will of God, and never let your countenance, your manner, or your language, indicate that you deem any of his commandments grievous. See how the dutiful and affectionate child delights to fulfil a father's pleasure, and what a happiness it feels in receiving his commands, and think how the will of God is done in heaven. The angels would be ashamed to have one cold feeling, or one unoccupied moment ; and it must be with surprise and horror that they witness our lukewarmness and indolence. Reflect on your Master's holy ardour, and pray for an increasing measure of it. When the sluggard tells you how agreeable the rest of indolence is, and when the wicked boast that they never were happy till they had shaken off the restraints of religion, consider that their satisfactions will soon end in remorse

and torture, and that the joy of the Lord is your strength. The only grief of a good man in duty is, that he cannot perform it better.

And let God's law be within your hearts in the strong affection which you bear to it, and in the subjection of all your thoughts and feelings to its influence. Let your wishes, your recollections, and purposes, be as fully regulated by its dictates, as the most open actions of your lives. The law of God in your heart will keep the world from its throne, and sin from having dominion over you. Let not the senseless jargon in which some inconsiderate zealots for the doctrines of grace disparage good works, lead you to imagine that the Gospel has abrogated the moral law, or generates any hostility to it. It never can pass away, and a good man cannot desire its subversion. It is the rule of duty on earth, the standard of perfection in heaven, and the transcript of Jehovah's moral excellence. It is magnified in all Christ's offices, it is the inseparable associate of the Gospel, and it will be the test in our final judgment.

ADDRESS IV.

2 SAMUEL I. 26.

“ I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant hath thou been unto me; thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

THE lamentation of David over the death of his friend Jonathan, is marked by exquisite pathos. The excellencies of his character, and the circumstances of his fate, are exhibited with a skill which calls forth all the power of fancy, and with a generous sensibility

which melts the heart. David forgets all the envy and violence of the father, and can think of nothing but the worth and friendship of the son. The excellencies of a friend never strike the heart so much as when the sad conclusion is forced upon us, that we shall see his face no more, and the enjoyments of friendship seem most delightful when we feel that they are gone never to return. David mourns that a man so excellent should perish in the prime of his days, and that so brave a soldier should fall before his enemies; but his heart bleeds at the thought, that a friend in whom he had promised himself so much happiness was snatched from him, and would never again heighten his joys, sooth his cares, or share his perils. He fondly remembers the sweetness of his manners, the generosity of his character, the ardour of his attachment, and his unwearied solicitude for his interest, and speaks as if he thought that there was not in all his country, nor in all his family, a heart that loved him like the heart of Jonathan.

Christians, you are now contemplating the death of a Friend, of whose love the kindness of Jonathan was but a faint shadow, and who died while contending with you renemies, but who died more than a conqueror. You are sorrowing, and why do ye mourn? If it is at the insults of his enemies, the tortures of the cross, or the severity of his agony, Jesus thus addresses you, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves." It is not for the tear of sympathy, but of contrition, that I now call. Sorrow for those sins which I died to expiate, and let the contemplation of my sufferings excite in you all the regrets, and lead you to all the amendment of true repentance.

How dear and how interesting is the relation in which Jesus stands to you! He is not ashamed to

call you brethren, and he will not be offended with the affection and pious confidence which is now looking to him, and calling him "my Brother." You are members of the same family. One is your Father, even God, and you have one spirit with him. He now surveys you sitting at his table in obedience to his command, and in love to his name, and says before angels and archangels, "Behold my mother and my brethren, for he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, my sister, and mother." He hath the majesty of a sovereign, the righteousness of a judge, and the splendour of a conqueror; but he hath also the heart of a brother; and from him you may expect all the kind attentions, and all the steady affection which this relation demands.

Jesus is indeed very pleasant to his people in the beauties of his character, the endearments of his love, and the blessings of his grace. The time spent in his society is the happiest of your life: your fears are dispelled by the assurances of his care, and your sorrows relieved in pouring out your complaint to him. His glory gives a charm to his condescension, which enraptures the soul, and by the amplitude of his stores he is able to fulfil every purpose of his own heart, and to gratify every wish of ours. You feel that for one smile of his countenance, one expression of his love, and one token of his kindness, you could renounce the world were it all your own. Friendship hath no pleasure so delightful, and life no joy so sweet.

His love to you was wonderful. Heaven cannot shew more of its wonders than the cross; for there they are displayed in the arduousness of his conflict, the extremity of his sufferings, and the vileness of his shame. The sun is darkened to attest how love veiled his glory, the rocks rend to proclaim its power, and

the graves open to shew that his affection survives the disruption of every earthly tie, and will triumph in the resurrection of the just.

But his love to you is wonderful. David knew not whether Jonathan still loved him. His attachment may have perished amid the overwhelming scenes of eternity, and though it did exist, he was not aware of any benefit which it could yield, or any form in which it could be displayed. But we know that Jesus in heaven is as affectionate and compassionate as ever, and his wondrous love may be seen there in the fervour and the constancy of his intercession, in the extent and the value of his preparations for your happiness, and in the condescension and the tenderness of his care.

And what created love can be compared with his? The utmost height to which human affection goes, is to share its possessions with the object beloved. "What is thy petition," said Ahasuerus to his queen, "and what is thy request, and it shall be granted thee to the half of the kingdom?" But the love of Jesus raises its objects to the right hand of the Majesty on high. The utmost depth to which human affection goes is to the dust of death for its object. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friend." But Jesus died under the curse, and for his enemies. The utmost extent of human affection is to sacrifice friends and country for the sake of its object, and to go with him to distant climes, in the idea that by his side we shall find a home. But what is this to that tender mercy which Jesus spreads over all his works, and to that grace which made him come from the bosom of his Father to dwell with mortals? The utmost length of human affection is life. Death is the close of human friendship, as well as of human glory. The tear of love can

no more melt the cold heart, than the pomp of the world can elevate the humbled clay ; but the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on them that fear him.

The strongest of all human attachments has been supposed to be that of a mother to her child. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb ! yea, she may forget, but I will not forget thee, I have graven thee on the palms of my hands, and thy walls are continually before me." There is an allusion here to a custom among the Jews, who used to mark on their hands a picture or representation of Jerusalem, to shew their zeal, and to cherish their affection for it, and it beautifully points out how the saints are ever before their Saviour as objects of care and love, a care and love compared with which, human vigilance seems heedless, and human affection cold. And now, Christians, it is our wish that you may taste that the Lord is gracious, and that his love shed abroad in your heart, and blessing the exercise of a communion table, may render this service the earnest of heaven.

After the Service.

LET not the sorrow of penitence be limited to this service, but let it mingle fear and caution with the exultation and the mirth of prosperity ; let it sanctify your grief in the day of worldly calamity, let it induce you to watch against the temptations by which your hearts have been enticed, and animate you to greater activity in holiness.

Maintain that confidence in Jesus which he so justly claims, and have no fellowship with those who are hos-

tile to his interests, and indifferent to his glory. Let there not be reason to say that your professions of kindness have been those of treachery like Joab, when he said to Amasa, "Art thou in health, my brother," and while he kissed him, smote him under the fifth rib, and shed out his bowels to the ground ; but shew that your heart is as affectionate as your words, by the careful avoidance of every sin, and by the uniform support of all that is pious in principle and feeling. I call on you to walk in the light of his countenance, and assure you that it will be by your own fault if ever your intercourse with Jesus is interrupted, or embittered by his language of upbraiding, or his frowns of displeasure.

Be ashamed of the defects of your love to him. There is much about your love to amaze us, but it is not that it is so ardent, so elevated, and so potent, but that it is so cold, so unsteady, and so inoperative. You see the degree of the miser's love to his gold in his haggard look, his excessive toil, his vigilant care, and his bread of carefulness. We see the degree of the ambitious man's love to false glory in the sacrifices which he has made, and in the scars which he bears ; but the conduct of too many of the disciples of Jesus shews with what reluctance they yield up what is dear, endure what is painful, or perform what is arduous for his sake. Place your hearts directly under the influence of his cross, that his dying love may raise every affection to its highest pitch, and fix them all on him, and with him may they remain unalienated to eternity. Devote to his love all the faculties of the soul, all the thoughts of the mind, all the feelings of the heart, all the vigour of the strength, and all the purposes and efforts of the life. Employ in his service every talent you possess, and every moment that you live. Serve him in every place, in every company, and in every condition. Beware of

seeking to conciliate the good will of the wicked and the profane, by the least symptom of acquiescence in their statements and plans, and never lose sight of that fidelity to your master which you have this day pledged. Honour your Lord by the courtesies of brotherly kindness in the intercourse of life, by employing the gains of prosperity in works of piety and mercy, by a calm and humble temper and manners in every season, and in every species of calamity, by melting seriousness and godly fear in his worship, and by patient suffering and elevated hope in your last hour.

And as David did not think that he had given a sufficient testimony of his friendship to Jonathan in this lamentation, but sought out, patronized, and protected his children for his sake, so your regard to Jesus must be shewn in kindness to his disciples, because they belong to him, and bear his image. Some of them require your counsel, others your sympathy, and others your alms, and all of them your prayers. And shall not you be willing to distribute, and ready to communicate? It is a delightful thought that Jesus will accept that beneficence as if it had supplied his own wants, and that sympathy as if it had alleviated his own woes.

Let not the presumption of the heart flatter you with the idea that the friends whom you love will always be spared to you. The heart which has so often been delighted with their society, must mourn their departure, and they may be taken from you not in the way that is common to man, or by a disease in which it may be in your power to minister to their comfort, but in battle, or at sea, or by fatal accidents. If called to such a trial of your faith and patience as this, imagine not that these circumstances of their departure, are in themselves indications of God's hatred of them or of you. Remember how Jonathan died, and David mourned, and

say, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth good in his sight." A stern philosophy laboured to repress, and to extinguish the feelings, but the religion you profess guides and controls them, gives comfort when they are most severely wounded, and renders their agitation a mean of amending the heart.

Let your temper and manners be such as will make your own departure be regretted by those who may survive you ; and it is only the suavity, the kindness, and the integrity of a benevolent and honest heart, which will secure you a place in the remembrance of the good. When the tongue of eloquence is silent, or the thoughts of the man of research perish, not a heart bleeds, and not a tear falls ; but when the face is changed where benignity smiled, and when the heart is cold where compassion glowed, such a sorrow is excited as shews, that while splendid talents may excite admiration, gentleness and humanity alone awaken love, and it is love alone that mourns at the grave. "Put on therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness and long suffering ;" thus your life will be felt as a blessing, and your death as a loss ; and thus will you pass from the regrets of friends to the kindest welcome of the spirits of the just, and of Him whose love is the bliss of heaven.

ADDRESS V.

SONGS i. 4.

"We will remember thy love more than wine."

IN these words the Church expresses her delight in communion with Christ, and her determination to remember his love more than the sweetest and most va-

lued of created enjoyments. Such is the purpose of every devout communicant, and nothing can be more reasonable than this preference. It may serve to confirm you in this pious resolution, and to strengthen your religious affections to point out to you that no earthly good deserves to occupy the same place with the love of Christ in the recollections of your memory, the estimation of your minds, and the delight of your hearts.

It is the love of Christ which gives to earthly comforts all their sweetness. The worldly man delights in them from the gratification which they yield to his appetites and passions; and such is his caprice, and so unsatisfactory does he find them, that he quickly turns with disgust from that which he sought with eagerness. But it is the love of Christ enjoyed in these, which makes the pious experience in the meanest dwelling, and the scantiest fare, more delight than the wicked have in the highest prosperity. Could this ingredient be extracted from their comforts, they would feel themselves wretched though feasted at the table, and clothed from the wardrobe of princes. That love of Jesus which gives verdure to the palms, and splendour to the crowns on high, sweetens the righteous man's morsel, and blesses his gains. Acknowledge to him at his table, how much he hath done to make you happy on earth, as well as in heaven. He has rendered you grateful and contented in circumstances where others, uninfluenced by religion, would have exhibited the worst excesses of impatience. It is thus that he preserves you from envying the superior advantages of others, and proves by your happiness in the humblest condition, that "a little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked."

The love of Christ can make the pious happy in the want of these comforts. Worldly men, when reduced to poverty, or bereft of friends, or brought by disease to the brink of the grave, abandon themselves to despondency, but in these circumstances the saints feel that their happiness is safe, and that their chief good is untouched. The prophet could rejoice in the God of his salvation, though every cluster was gone from the vineyard, every stalk from the field, and every sheep from the pastures. Behold the primitive Christians suffering the sorest calamities : persecution prepares for them the instruments of death, famine sweeps away their stores with the besom of destruction, and disease chastens them with strong pain, yet in all these things they were more than conquerors, through him that loved them. They are represented not merely as supporting and surviving the shock of such united calamities, but as unhurt by their fury, defying their power, and triumphing gloriously over them all. The love of Christ can bring the peace of heaven into the worst troubles of the world, can cheer when earthly joys are failing, and bless when they perish.

Let your devout acknowledgments be now made to your Saviour, who in situations where your happiness was supposed to be ruined, kept it uninjured, and who, when you were deprived of that from which you had derived much consolation, fulfilled his kind assurance, " I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you ;" and let this preserve you from disquieting fears as to the future, for " my God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

The love of Christ can and does yield much better comforts than any of an earthly kind. A worldly man has no idea of a happiness superior to what the world yields him, and for no other has he a relish. He

sometimes boasts that he is too rational to be puffed up with the deceits of enthusiasm, and that he cares for no happiness but what gratifies his senses ; but ye have been renewed in the spirit of your mind, and you know that there are better blessings than the world can bestow. Ye know that no earthly enjoyment can be compared with the hidden manna, and the wine of the kingdom. It is on the image of your Saviour, the favour of your God, and the grace of his Spirit, that your hearts are set, and to minds occupied with these, the joys and honours of the world seem empty and grovelling. Your love abounds in all knowledge and judgment, and you have been taught to approve the things that are more excellent ; and were Jesus now to say to you, " Ask what I shall give you," you would not solicit riches, or honour, or long life, or vengeance on your enemies, but your request would be, that his love might be more strongly felt in your hearts. Such is the petition which best becomes his table, and which he delights to hear, and to answer there, and the more fully it is answered, the more devout will be your exercise, and the more abundant your joy. And the love of Christ will continue when the comforts of this world have passed away for ever. These earthly comforts are not designed for a long continuance with you. At death they shall take their leave of you, and as you give them a last look, you will rejoice in hope of seeing the Lord's goodness in the land of the living. They may alleviate bodily pain, and excite the gratitude of the heart, and this is the utmost limit of their influence ; but the love of Christ has unstinged death, prepared a quiet resting place for the body, and opened heaven for the souls of believers. It shall enlighten them there by a sun which shall never go down, refresh them by a river of life always flowing, and adorn

them with a crown that never fades away. It hath prepared for them the robes of kings, the work of angels, and the life of God. It shall through eternity maintain their felicity, and delight in it. Now, if amidst all the honours of the world above, the love of Christ shall still have the pre-eminence, if amidst all the variety of their pleasures it shall still be their chief joy, and if amid all the themes of their praise, it shall still be the burden of their song, we surely should remember it more than all below the sun.

Christians, we trust these are your impressions, and that he who searcheth the heart, finds this holy resolution formed there, and expressed to him in this pious aspiration, "If I forget thee, O my Saviour, let my right hand forget its cunning, and let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not thy love to my chief joy." You are now observing an ordinance in which Christ's love is seen most strikingly in his shed blood, and felt most powerfully in the fellowship of his sufferings; and may you be blessed with his favour, and thus adore him, "Because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee."

After the Service.

TREASURE the excellencies of the love of Christ in your memories with peculiar care. Worldly men are careful to preserve a lively and accurate recollection of the objects which have gratified them, of the promises which have excited their hopes, and of the methods by which they have triumphed over their opponents; but the good man would wish if it were possible to banish every trace of what is vain and trivial from his memory, and to occupy it completely with the displays of the love of Jesus. Study those displays with care, re-

view them with frequency, listen with eager attention to every discourse which may expand your ideas of it, or which may deepen its impression, and avoid every thing which may weaken its hold of your memory and of your heart. Let this be the purpose which you now form: "Whatever I may forget, thy love, O Lord Jesus, shall be remembered, and whatever may claim the chief place in my memory, this alone shall have it. Present comforts may render me less anxious to call back those that are gone; but while I rejoice in what thou bestowest, and in thy gifts to my soul this day, I will never forget what thou hast done. In the decline of nature, memory may lose many of its recollections; but it shall not be with the consent of my will, if it forgets aught that I have known, or received from thee."

Contemplate the excellencies of this love with more frequency and delight than any other objects. Devote large portions of your time to meditation on this topic, and exclude every thing which may distract your attention; yea, even in seasons when other things have just claims on your notice, let your Saviour's love mingle itself with your views and purposes. This will neither impede nor distract you in any duty or engagement, and it will preserve you from the anxieties by which worldly men are harassed, and from the temptations before which they fall. Never let this spirituality be exhibited in any ostentatious form, for this will be employed to render your profession ridiculous, and will be considered as giving plausibility to the charge of hypocrisy against you. Let the beauties of creation lead you to Him of whose glory they are but shadows, and the events of providence to Him who worketh all things according to the counsel of his will. Let the truths of Scripture guide you to Him whose glory it unfolds, and whose will it declares; and when you

muse on the worth and the affection of a departed friend, let faith look to the Saviour exercising unwearyed care over his own, and loving them for ever, and say, "The Lord lives, blessed be my rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted." "We will think of thy loving-kindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple, in the midst of our worldly cares and troubles, in the midst of our best enjoyments, in the midst of the sorrows of death, and in the midst of the wonders of heaven."

Let me call on you also, to make him every suitable return of affection. Without love to Jesus, his love will neither be remembered nor thought on; for who feels any anxiety about meditating on that which is to him a matter of indifference. It is love that strengthens the recollections of the memory, and maintains unwearyed the views of meditation. And then only is his love remembered suitably to its value, when we can say, "We love him, because he first loved us." Can we contemplate love so ardent with indifference, love so faithful and constant with a heart wavering and treacherous, love making such sacrifices, and bestowing such blessings, without a wish to present to him our all, and love shining in the whole course of his mediation, and yet deem it sufficient to yield him the worship of an hour, or the thought of a moment? You condemn such conduct as unreasonable, and you feel that it would be most shameful and base; and though such a part could be acted with safety, we trust that you shudder at the idea of being guilty of it. Ever act as becomes those who have said, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth whom I desire besides thee?" and let this be your impression through all the scenes of time, which you will feel

through all the ages of eternity, that "Christ is all in all."

I exhort you further, to give every suitable expression of your high sense of your Redeemer's love. In your praises mention the loving kindness of the Lord; and let these be the books which you delight to read in which his name is magnified. Let your conversation be religious and heavenly, and in order to its being listened to with attention and respect, let it never be mixed with the language of party, or any thing that indicates a censorious temper. There is little to instruct, and less to edify, in controversial discussions. Let us speak the truth in love, and when we are called on to express our disapprobation of what is vicious, let us do it in a manner which may enhance in our own estimation, and in that of others, the beauties of holiness. Embrace every opportunity of attending on that ordinance where Christ's love is commemorated, and shew that this exercise of communicating tends to raise his disciples to higher degrees of elevation above the world, and of zeal in holiness; and be assured that the communion table is never deserted but where love hath become cold, and that it is a strong indication that other obligations are also disregarded. And remember that Jesus hath said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another;" and "if ye love me, keep my commandments." Such are the evidences of saintship fixed by Jesus himself, who hath not left this to be done by the wisdom of the world, by bigotry in its rancour, or presumption in its vain conceit; and such is the test to which he will appeal when he shall judge the world in righteousness.

I hope that it is the purpose of all of you without exception thus to remember Christ's love. There never was a saint who dissented from this resolution, or who

felt disposed to censure it as extravagant or impracticable. It has been the resolution of early piety to which the world is opening, and of aged piety, to which it is closing, of the religious in prosperity, when all is smiling, and in adversity, when all is dark and dismal. It is the resolution not only of the soul that is happy in the sense of this love, but of the soul that sighs, "O that I knew where I might find him." It was the resolution of the pious and the good who once filled the places which you now occupy, and it will be the purpose of those who shall shew forth the death of Christ when you are gathered to your fathers. Now let these be the purposes with which you leave this scene of holy fellowship, that whatever labour it may cost you, that however few may think, and feel, and act as you do; and that whatever opposition you may meet with, your thoughts and your affections, your praises and prayers, your life and death, shall be devoted to him that loved you, and washed you from your sins in his own blood.

SERMON I.

The First Promise Illustrated.

GENESIS III. 15.

I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed ; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

A CRIMINAL'S receiving his doom is as solemn a scene as we can witness on earth. The judge, the culprit, the crime, and the sentence, all excite the strongest emotion, and command the fixed attention of every heart. The judge, venerable for years and experience ; the criminal, quaking for fear, and overwhelmed with bitter reflections ; the crime, demanding the heaviest punishment in its enormity, and in its fatal consequences to the safety of men's persons or property, suggest meditations deeply interesting, and, for a season, completely engross the mind.

In our text a judgment is presented incomparably more grand and impressive than any ever beheld in courts of justice. Here the Judge is the Eternal God, the One Lawgiver, who is able both to save and to destroy : the criminals are the devil, who tempted our first parents to sin, and our unhappy progenitors, filled with shame and terror on account of their fall ; the crime was the first that ever was committed on our

globe, and the source of all evil, natural and moral; and the doom contains certain degradation, discomfiture, and ruin to Satan; and the discipline of labour and sorrow, the abasement of mortality and corruption, and the hope of victory and salvation, to the descendants of Adam. Such a scene, realized by faith, will seem tremendous as the great and solemn day of the Lord; but its pledge of mercy to our race may induce us to mingle gratitude with our awe, and to rejoice that their sentence displays a tender commiseration to which they had no claim, and is fraught with such rich grace as secures the redemption of its objects for ever.

It should make us feel peculiar interest in this scene, that with these offenders we fell, and that the Saviour in whom they are called to hope, is revealed to us as the object of our trust, and the Redeemer from guilt and misery of all who come unto God by him. Our text is a part of the tempter's doom; and while God denounces in figurative language the shame and wretchedness now to befall him, he gives, in a threatening to him, a glorious promise of deliverance to man from the bondage of Satan, and from the evils of the fall.

In discoursing on this passage, I shall call your attention to the combatants; to the enmity which produced the contest, and to its effects on both parties as here stated; and shall then point out the peculiar claims which this promise has to our most serious regard.

I. The combatants are the serpent and his seed, and the woman and her seed. The serpent and his seed are ranged on the one side. Many theories have been formed respecting the serpent and its agency in the fall. Some have insisted that the whole scene

is an allegory, and have represented this interpretation as the only mode of protecting it from impious ridicule; but this scheme cannot be reconciled with those references which are made to the events here described in other places of Scripture as real incidents; and is a way of escaping from difficulties which deprives the sacred narratives of their most interesting characters.

The opinion which seems to coincide most exactly with the whole of the passage, is that which represents the devil as entering into a serpent, and carrying on his temptation by it as his instrument; and this vehicle he chose as being least likely to excite the suspicion of Eve, and best adapted to engage her attention. By the seed of the serpent, we are to understand not merely the evil spirits ranged under the banner of the prince of the devils, but wicked men, in whose hearts he reigns, who are influenced by his spirit, and led captive by him at his will. Our Lord represents this to have been the case in a most dreadful extent with the Jews, in the falsehood and cruelty to which they were addicted. There are countries and eras in which some vicious excesses seem exploded; but this arises from the circumstances in which men are placed; and evils as offensive to God, and as ruinous to their peace, abound, against which no voice is lifted, and for which no regret is felt. And how numerous is the serpent's seed! The whole world lieth in wickedness. In every circle their venom flows, from every quarter their hissings are heard, and in every path they lurk to sting.

The seed of the woman is the combatant on the other side. This expression cannot here represent all the descendants of Eve, for many of them belong to the family of Satan, and live and die under his power;

but the great Messiah is thus designated, because he was the most eminent of her offspring, in whom human nature appears in more than its pristine glories. His coming was desired for ages, as the Man of God's right hand; while he dwelt among us, this was the exclamation to which his mighty works gave rise, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!" and now in his exalted state, he appears as the Son of Man in the midst of the throne. In him all the graces shine by which that nature can be adorned, and he is its chief benefactor, and its brightest ornament. It was not so much the glory of the Man Christ Jesus that the storm was calmed by his rebuke, and diseases cured by his touch, as that devotion never languished in his heart, that benevolence was never chilled amidst unparalleled suffering from the cruelty of "his own," and that he always did the things that pleased his Father. This expression may likewise point out the peculiarity of his descent. His extraction being reckoned from the woman, may intimate that he should be born of a virgin; and that in his birth the divine power and sovereignty should be signally manifested. At the mystery of the incarnation, Socinians may stumble, and infidels may scoff, but before it angels bend in adoring wonder; and the wisest and best of men exclaim, "To us a child is born, and to us a son is given, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace."

The genuine members of the church may be included also under this expression. They are born of the Spirit, they bear his image; and however small their number has yet been, they shall be like the "drops of dew from the womb of the morning." Such has

been the consoling hope of good men in times of great moral degeneracy; and had they their wish, every heart would be his throne, every voice would call him blessed, every character would exhibit his virtues, every talent would be appropriated to his cause, and the whole earth would be filled with his glory.

II. Let us now consider the enmity betwixt these parties.

1. In nature there is the most direct antipathy betwixt them. Though once a holy and benevolent being, the devil is now so completely depraved, that hatred of God, and malignity to his offspring, are his ruling principles; impurity and falsehood are his only delight, and the spread of corruption and misery is his only triumph. With regard to human beings under his influence, it is certain that "the carnal mind is enmity against God," and that this is manifested in the excesses of impiety and rebellion where it is not repressed by the dictates of conscience, or the dread of shame. But the seed of the woman is the Holy One and the Just, faithfulness is the girdle of his loins, and benevolence is the glory of his character. Love to God, and love to man, were the great principles by which he was animated and guided in all his ways. And with regard to his people, in so far as they are sanctified, they think and feel as our Lord did. It is his piety which breathes in the fervour of their devotions, his heavenly mindedness which soars in the elevation of their wishes, his resignation which quiets the heart in the most painful bereavements, and his beneficence which bestows in their alms, and weeps in their sympathy.

2. But there is also an opposition in their plans. The object of Satan is to mar the beauty, to destroy the order, and to ruin the happiness of God's creatures,

and thus to deprive him of that glory which they were formed to yield ; and he is not restrained in these attempts by any emotions of pity or terror. Every failure in his plans seems only to inflame his animosity, and his wrath is greatest when he knows that “ his time is but short.” Prompted by hatred of God and man, because our nature is more favoured of heaven than his, and devised with all the subtlety which craft and experience can give, his plans are intended to render the schemes of grace to our fallen world abortive. To keep in ruin the race whose innocence and happiness he subverted, is the object of them all. But the plan of the Messiah is to glorify God by magnifying his law, expiating sin, and restoring his fallen offspring to his image and favour. This plan, framed in infinite wisdom and love, no opposition on the part of the devil can make him abandon as impracticable, and no resistance by us can induce him to relinquish it in disgust. It is a plan which has given rise to all that is great or beneficial in any human projects, and which teaches us to abhor the base and sordid schemes of worldly ambition.

3. I may add, that there is a direct hostility in their operations. The devil is incessantly employed in deeds of rebellion against God, and in inducing men to commit sin by corrupting their moral principles, overpowering the remonstrances of reason and conscience, inflaming their passions, and rousing their appetites to fury by his allurements and promises. To impede the progress of truth and virtue, to deepen the gloom of ignorance, to aggravate the miseries of remorse, and to hurry his victims to despair and ruin, is his own labour, and that in which he employs his wretched slaves. But how different is the employment of our Lord. He was occupied while on earth in fulfilling

all righteousness, and he employs the high powers with which he is now entrusted, to diffuse the knowledge and the love of God, to comfort the penitent, to unite men in that charity which is the bond of perfectness, and establish every institution among them which may ameliorate their present condition, or prepare them for eternity. It is our Lord's aim to guide men to the pure worship of God, to teach us the only mode of pardon and acceptance, to promote our moral improvement, to destroy the evil passions from which contentions flow, and to bless the families of the earth with the comforts of peace, and with the joys of salvation; but Satan labours to debase the service of Jehovah by superstitious rites, to deceive the soul with false hopes of mercy, to relax the obligations of morality, to infuriate the heart for rapine and murder, to aggravate our miseries by exciting discontent and impatience, and to involve us in utter and irremediable destruction.

Before I leave this part of the subject, it is proper for me to notice the origin of this enmity. Jehovah declares that he will put enmity betwixt the parties. With regard to Satan, God can only be said to produce it by leaving him and his seed to the influence of their own corruption, and by those measures which he pursues for the salvation of mankind, which, while they call forth the admiration and the joy of benevolent angels, fill devils with envy and rage. With regard to the woman, this enmity was produced immediately after the fall, against the evil spirit by whose seduction she had been betrayed into such a dreadful crime. As to our blessed Saviour, aversion from Satan, his spirit and works, was produced in his human nature at its formation, and it was publicly manifested when he was called to go forth and destroy the works of the devil. And with regard to the members of his church, it is put

into their hearts when they are turned from the power of Satan to God, when they are made acquainted with his true character and aims, and when they are inspired with abhorrence of all sin, and with the love of holiness.

This is not an enmity which admits of reconciliation, or which may be mitigated on either side, for it is impossible that our Lord should ever become less vehement in his hostility to Satan; and though the grace of God could form this enemy of all righteousness to the love of it, it will never be employed for that purpose. There are seasons when this enmity may be less apparent than at others; but, in this case, the parties are like armies in ambush, preparing for an open and violent assault.

III. I proceed now to call your attention to the result of this enmity.

1. It is stated that the Messiah shall bruise the serpent's head. For a long time Satan appeared the undisturbed master of the field. Gross darkness covered the nations, and even in Judea, ignorance and wickedness prevailed, notwithstanding all the privileges which were there enjoyed. There were seasons in which some sinners were reclaimed, but so hopeless seemed his overthrow, and man's release, that the question was asked with feelings bordering on despair, "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty?" This long subjugation of the world to the influence of the devil was permitted, that his overthrow might be more signal, and that the approach of our Great Deliverer might be more eagerly desired as our only help.

In the fulness of time the Messiah appeared in our nature, and, in the character of the Captain of Salvation, entered the field. Severe were the blows which were given to the serpent during the temptations in

the wilderness. After being foiled in these assaults, Satan rallied his forces, but it was only to receive a more shameful defeat than before. In the doctrines preached by our Lord, errors, prejudices, and delusions, sanctioned by the authority of the scribes, and by the traditions of the fathers, were exposed, and in the expulsion of devils from bodies of which they had taken possession, a pledge was given of the complete subversion of his kingdom. Even then Satan feared his cause was hopeless, and thus addressed Him: "We know thee who thou art, the holy one of God; art thou come to torment us before the time?" But it was on the cross that the fatal blow was given. It was then that the most furious assault which the powers of hell could make was made, and repulsed to their eternal confusion. Even then, while the ferocious multitude beheld nothing but a butt for their scoffs, and a victim of their malice, he spoiled principalities and powers, and made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them on his cross. Then that guilt was expiated on which alone the devil could call for our condemnation, a right to eternal life was purchased for those whom he was labouring to plunge into the same misery with himself, that grace was obtained which shall beautify the soul with salvation, and that spirit of power and love in which they shall be more than conquerors.

He bruises the serpent's head when he subverts the dominion of Satan in the hearts of his elect, and when he forms there those holy principles which his arts cannot ensnare, nor his threats subdue. He does it also in the victories which he gives them over temptation. Some of these temptations are managed with peculiar subtlety, and urged with great vehemence, but this only serves to display the strength which is made perfect

in their weakness, and the last act of the departing saint is trampling on this serpent.

He shall bruise the serpent's head, when, in the latter days, he shall make truth and virtue, freedom and happiness, universally to prevail, when the various systems of religious imposture shall be broken in pieces, and when a world liberated from the bondage of corruption, shall thus address the tyrant that enslaved them:—"How art thou brought down to the dust that didst deceive the nations!" And he will do this at that day when death and Satan shall be cast into the lake of fire, and when the full measure of his punishment shall be allotted to him, and it shall be aggravated by the curses of those whom he has ensnared. The sentence will be executed by the hand that smote him on Calvary, and his fury shall crush him to the lowest hell.

The expression, bruising his head, intimates that this attack should be fatal. Naturalists say that the serpent's poison is lodged in its head, and that a bruise here is death to that animal. And thus fatal shall be the stroke which Satan shall receive from Jesus by the rod of his strength. He may struggle violently, but this is like the convulsive agony that precedes dissolution, and shall only more rapidly exhaust his remaining strength, and more largely augment his anguish and shame.

I only observe farther, on this part of the subject, that this exploit is appropriated to the Captain of Salvation, and to him alone the glory of it is due. His feet are like to fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace, and when he is resolved to crush, it is equally impossible to evade or to resist him.

2. Let us consider how the Captain of Salvation should suffer in this conflict. When we hear of any glorious

achievement of the champion of our cause, our first solicitude is about his safety. If he falls in battle, the victory is turned into mourning, and the high sounding cymbals give place to the voice of them that weep. If he is wounded, the hearts of multitudes watch by his couch; and when he is restored to the sight and service of a grateful country, it is then that the triumph is felt and celebrated. And can we be indifferent to the fate of the Captain of Salvation? His heel was to be bruised. This expression finely accords with the figure in the text. As the serpent wounds the heel that crushes him, so Satan would afflict his conqueror, and this prediction was fulfilled in his exile in infancy, in the hardships of his youth, in the poverty that abridged his comforts, in the reproaches which assailed his name, in the violence which resisted his efforts, in the crucifixion of his body, and in the terrors and sorrows of his soul. In all these modes Satan exerted his power to discourage and to overwhelm him; but his efforts reached only to his human nature, and the bruises which it received were soon completely cured. On the third day he came forth from the tomb, travelling in the greatness of his strength, and shining in the brightness of his glory; and now the Son of Man stands on the right hand of God, and while he beholds the serpent writhing under the effects of his wound, he exults in the power of an endless life.

But the expression intimates also the sufferings of his people. Satan attempts by poverty to render them discontented, unjust, and envious, by the reproach and ill usage of the world to lead them to malignity and revenge, by pain and sickness to produce fretfulness or despondence, to make them miserable by the horrors of remorse, and the forebodings of slavish fear, and to detain their bodies in the grave if their souls

should be translated to glory ; but his influence shall be only for a season. It is not in his power to touch the vitals of the new creature, and “ their light and momentary afflictions shall work for them an exceeding and an eternal weight of glory.” Their souls, when received to heaven, shall exhibit no spot of depravity, and when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality, no trace shall remain of the disease that wasted the beauty, or the putrefaction that dissolved the structure of the body. In the frame which is fashioned like to Christ’s glorious body, redeemed man shall appear the perfection of beauty, and the remembrance of the sorrows of earth shall only serve to enhance the blessedness of heaven, and to heighten their gratitude to Him, who has brought them safely to glory, through the scene of conflict, and the vale of death.

IV. Let us now attend to the peculiar excellencies of this promise. There is a great degree of pleasure felt by many in contemplating the relics of former ages, and that pleasure is proportioned to their scarcity, and to the distance of the period to which they belong. We regard them with peculiar interest, if their state of preservation is such as to shew how completely they have resisted the caprice or violence of men, and the corroding influence of time.

Much pleasure also is felt in reviewing the earliest discoveries of science, and the commencement of these inventions in the useful and ornamental arts which have contributed so much to the benefit of society. The memory of the fathers in the sciences, and in the arts, is cherished with great veneration ; and, in celebrating every name which, in the course of ages has added improvement to these, fame pays a new tribute to their industry and their genius. If such is the case,

this promise has peculiar claims on our attention. It is one of the few things which remain of the first age of the world. While thousands of incidents are sunk in oblivion; while it is impossible to say where Eden stood, or where Adam slumbers, this promise, which was the grand consolation of his life, is preserved. It is not presented to us in such a mixed form as that it is difficult for us to separate the spurious parts from the genuine, but pure and complete, as when it issued from the lips of Jehovah. It is a promise almost as old as that sun which gladdens the nations. It is the commencement of the gospel, the first dawn of hope to guilty mortals, and the first message of grace to man. It is the only revelation of mercy which the world enjoyed for several hundred years, and was all that the penitent had then to look to amid the horrors of guilt, and that the pious had to grasp in the gloom and the perils of the last hour. It has been the salvation of thousands, and the triumph of the righteous in all generations.

How admirable is the grace of this promise. The blessings it exhibits are not suspended on any conditions which must be performed by us ere the triumph could be gained, but a Conqueror is revealed whose mighty agency should achieve the victory, and who should bear all the glory. The grace of it will appear still more striking if we consider that it was not made to offenders bewailing their crimes, and pleading for mercy at their Maker's feet, but to criminals attempting to hide themselves from his presence, and so utterly void of all true penitence, that they apologise for their sin by throwing the blame of it on others, nay, even on the God who had formed Eve to be man's companion. In such circumstances nought could be

expected but wrath without mixture, and yet mercy rejoices over judgment.

It is a promise contained in the serpent's curse. Our first parents heard the serpent's sentence, and it must have been with trepidation and horror. They were anticipating a doom still more severe. In pity to their anguish, God gave them this promise to support their hearts, and to mitigate their sentence when it should be pronounced. The unexpectedness of it would make it to them like life from the dead. The sorest punishment which can be inflicted on the malignant and the envious, is the happiness of those whom they have injured, their recovery from the misery into which they had plunged them, and the avenging of their wrongs on those who have oppressed them; and in this promise it is intimated that the evils brought on man should be removed; that the Captain of Salvation would take vengeance on his spoiler, and would in our nature trample him in the dust.

It was a most seasonable promise. It is while misery is most acute, and while the heart is most oppressed with horror and despair, that the voice of mercy is most delightful; and such was the condition of our first parents. The happiness they once enjoyed must have rendered their present reflections most agonising, and in the blackness of despair the morning star arose.

The kindness of God in this promise appears also in his not intimating the precise time of its accomplishment. Had they been told that it was not to be accomplished till four thousand years had elapsed, and that sin and misery would overspread the world and keep it so long in bondage, their joy would have been damped, and they would have looked forward to it with a feeble hope, and with a languid gratitude. But

they are permitted to anticipate the approach of their Champion, and to exult in the certainty of his conquests; and the delay of his coming was not made known to them till they were prepared to bear it.

It is probable that this promise was the means of conversion to our first parents. Had God only spoken to them in wrath, those harsh suspicions of the divine character which the devil had infused would have been confirmed, and their hearts would have been hardened in enmity against him. Despair is a state of mind where all is gloomy and horrible. It admits of no soft emotions of soul in reference to the being it considers as vindictive and inexorable. Our first parents knew Jehovah's goodness to the innocent, but till this promise was made, they knew not that he could be merciful to the guilty. In it there was such a display of the divine compassion as melted their hearts, and the hope which it inspired could not be exercised without increasing their love. Then their first tears were shed, and they were not tears of penitence merely, but of gratitude and affection. A divine influence accompanied this promise, explaining its grace, and inclining them to embrace it; and thus a life was formed beyond the power of Satan to destroy, a nobler life than that which was lost, a life to be perfected not on earth but in heaven.

It is my last remark, on this part of the subject, that this promise was confirmed by sacrifice, and by the first sacrifice. Soon after this promise was made, a sacrifice was offered, for to Adam and his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them. These animals had not been killed for food, but must have been slain by divine appointment, to typify that great oblation by which the Messiah should take away the sin of the world. In the death of these victims

there was a lively representation to their faith of him who through death should destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil. The first blood that was shed flowed in sacrifice, and the first death which was endured was a type of that decease by which it is abolished. While offering these victims on the altar, and while they wept in penitence as they contemplated the doom which they deserved, they rejoiced in the hope of that sacrifice which should be the propitiation for sin, that cross which should be the conquest of the gates of hell, that dissolution which should be the plague of death, and that resurrection which should be the destruction of the grave.

In concluding this discourse, I call on good men to bless their God for the light which succeeding revelations have shed over this promise; and let them rejoice that this predicted victory is gained. Instead of looking forward with anxiety and fear, ye look back with exultation, and say, "O sing unto the Lord a new song, for he hath done marvellous things; his right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory." Let the victory of your Lord encourage you in your conflict. You struggle with a conquered foe; and the trial of your faith shall be found to praise, honour, and glory hereafter. Ever consider sin as your worst enemy, and neither cherish it nor spare it in any form which it may assume. Despair not of the final triumph of righteousness either in the world or in yourselves. Soon shall it be said to you, "come and put your feet on the necks of these enemies;" and you shall do it with the song of exultation: "Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord." And in the day when you shall judge angels, the Redeemer will be glorified in his seed; and while you celebrate his victories, and the remembrance

of your own rises within you, you will look to Jesus, and say, "through him we did valiantly, he did tread down our enemies under us."

Let unconverted men submit themselves to God. Though all the evil spirits in hell are combined with you against the Saviour, ye can neither have impunity nor success. Think of the baseness of enmity to him who is the best friend of our race, and no feelings can attend it but those of bitter disappointment and guilty fear. What madness is it to be in league with the destroyer of our race, and to be opponents of our only Saviour. Can he who bruised the head of the serpent be unable to crush his brood? Except you repent, you must perish; and if you would shudder at the thought of being cast into a dungeon full of venomous serpents, can you think with unconcern of being consigned to everlasting fire with the devil and his angels? Will you prefer being crushed with Satan to being saved with the redeemed? If you wish for salvation, you must accept it in the mode which God hath appointed, even by faith in him who is the way, the truth, and the life. Submit to God without reserve, and without delay; fix your hopes on the great Redemer, and yield yourselves to him for every service which he requires, and for every conflict to which he leads you, saying, display thy banner, and we will fight; shew us thy way, and we will follow; put forth thy strength in us, and we will conquer; live in us, and we shall never die; and make us perfect, and we will sin no more. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God."

I only add, that no service can be more reasonable, and none accords more with the better feelings of the heart than that in which the children of God are now

to engage. How eager are men to keep in remembrance the achievements of their warriors. Their poets celebrate their exploits with all the power of genius, and lofty pillars are raised to tell to distant ages their mighty deeds; and if victories which extend the power and commerce of a country, or vindicate its rights and honour, be thus celebrated, shall that combat be forgotten which was fought for our life and salvation? I call on you who feel that you cannot forget it, and who are the sincere friends of truth and holiness, to wash your hands in innocence, and to approach God's altar that you may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all his wondrous works. Who is on the Lord's side, let him come forward; and "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of glory may come in. But who is this King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty; the Lord, mighty in battle." "Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered; and let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might."

ADDRESS VI.

The first Promise Applied.

CHRISTIANS, you are now assembled to commemorate the fulfilment of this ancient promise, and the achievement of this mighty victory. The ignorant and the profane have classed it with the dark sayings by which the crafty sport with the curiosity of their fellow creatures; but we behold God performing the mercy

promised to the fathers, and remembering this early pledge of salvation. No lapse of time could efface it from his remembrance, and no event could make him change his purpose. Satan, from the long period which had elapsed, and from the ease with which he had baffled the most formidable opponents of his power, might imagine that he had no discomfiture to dread, and that Jesus of Nazareth should be another victim to his fury; but behold how he treads him in his anger, and tramples him in his fury. The victory was delayed that it might be more decisive, and the struggle was protracted, that the graces of the Messiah might be more fully displayed, and that the power of the adversary might be utterly destroyed. In no period of the ancient dispensation was the hope of the Saviour's appearance lost. It was cherished and strengthened by succeeding predictions from age to age; and the pious beheld it typified in their various sacrifices; and in those splendid victories, in which the carnal saw nothing but the valour of their warriors, and the glory of their country, they beheld preludes of the manifestation of the Son of God to destroy the works of the devil.

Ye are not called like them to hope for his coming, or to anticipate Satan's defeat. "The voice of rejoicing and salvation is now in the tabernacles of the righteous," for the right hand of the Lord hath done valiantly, and through the death which you now commemorate, hath vanquished and spoiled the prince of this world and all his hosts. And "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save."

While you contemplate this appearance, and listen

to this answer, let this be your language, "we will keep thy word, we will trust in thy power, and we will follow thy standard." You behold his heel bruised, and remembering that he was wounded in fighting your battles, and bruised as the chastisement of your peace, you will regard his sufferings with melting interest; and I beseech you to yield to him the admiration, gratitude, and love, which his generous and triumphant exertions for you demand.

After the Service.

"I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart, I will shew forth all thy marvellous works." Such is the assurance you have now given him, and let no worldly perplexity or engagement ever induce you to forget it. Shew yourselves his genuine disciples by a determined opposition to error and vice, even when they appear in the most plausible forms, and are supported by men of note in the world. You can see nought in them, even when most artfully disguised, but what dishonours God, and ruins the soul. They may call your scruples and objections antiquated prejudices; but the specious title of modern liberality is often employed as a cover for what is impious in opinion, and licentious in morals. How truly honourable is it to be associated with the few who have not defiled their garments, and who shall walk with Christ in white, for they are counted by him worthy!

Cultivate the graces by which you will contend with success against your spiritual enemies. Faith will shew you the Saviour ready to help you in the hour of need; love will make you abhor every thing that is offensive to him; patience will incline you to suffer to any degree, and for any period, rather than yield;

meekness will enable you to repress those angry and vindictive feelings, which so often hurry men into crimes; fear will teach you to walk circumspectly; temperance will dispose you to resist all the enticements of sinners; and hope will encourage you in all your difficulties by the expectations which it inspires of their happy termination.

Be careful to aid the tempted. By a single hint you may confirm in integrity the man who is tempted to fraud or falsehood; strengthen the sober purpose of him who is solicited to intemperance; cheer the heart that is drooping in despondence, and liberate those who are oppressed by the devil. These are valuable offices of Christian charity; and by the communion of this day, you have given a new pledge that you will perform them. "They helped every man his neighbour, and every man said to his brother, be of good courage." Now God has prepared your table in the presence of your enemies, they have been eyeing you with envy, and will seek for a fit opportunity of annoying you. Watch, therefore, and pray that you enter not into temptation. Soon shall you reach that scene of peace where they shall molest you no more, and where you shall celebrate the Saviour's victories in a paradise into which the serpent can never enter, and where sin and sorrow are never known. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which grows in the midst of the paradise of God."

ADDRESS VII.

PSALM LXXXV. 10.

“ Mercy and truth are met together ; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.”

THOUGH these words may be applied to the conduct of Jehovah to the Jews after the captivity in Babylon, when he had glorified his justice in their sufferings, and was now manifesting his former loving-kindness, it is obvious from the loftiness and energy of the passage, that the Psalmist's mind was directed to a scene incomparably more grand and interesting. He anticipates the redemption of man from sin and wrath ; and the wondrous display of mercy and justice, truth and peace, in that stupendous transaction, in united lustre and perfect harmony. To such meditations you are now called, and may you pursue them under the guidance of the spirit of wisdom and piety.

In the study of the divine excellencies a pious mind finds its purest and sublimest enjoyment ; the Bible furnishes us with ample assistance in it, and opens our way through difficulties in which reason would have been lost in perplexity. In viewing the divine character man cannot avoid considering it in reference to his own, and has often felt the most painful anxieties as to the manner in which Jehovah would act to him as a sinner. While the goodness spread over the creation might excite a feeble hope of mercy, the judgments which God executes on the guilty were adapted to repress that hope, and to awaken in the mind the most awful forebodings. How delightful is it to hear that justice hath obtained satisfaction to all its claims on us,

and that Jehovah can, without the least prejudice to his truth, "shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness to us through our Lord Jesus Christ."

In the state and circumstances of men, there was somewhat which called for the exercise of various attributes. Man is a sinner, and justice pleads that the wages of sin is death; and truth urges the threatening that "the soul that sinneth shall die." But man is unhappy at present, and if this threatening is executed, he must be still more miserable; and at the view of wretchedness so dreadful and so hopeless, the bowels of mercy were troubled. That compassion which hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, longed for the return of the offender; but how his guilt could be expiated, or his repentance accepted, no wisdom but that of an infinite understanding could determine. History records various instances of painful perplexities into which judges and kings have been thrown, by the circumstances which called for the punishment of a criminal, and those which pleaded with them to spare him, and the expedients to which they have had recourse to reconcile the exercise of clemency with the honour of the law, and the safety of the community. In these we behold pity struggling with principles stern and unyielding, the one viewing the criminal as an unhappy being, of the same blood with ourselves, the other as an offender richly meriting an awful doom; yet this can give us no adequate idea of the light in which man appeared to the great God, as a creature and as a sinner: though in the divine mind there never could be hesitation or uncertainty as to the course to be pursued.

But could created wisdom discover no method for reconciling these claims? Some have imagined that God might pardon sinners from the abundance of his

grace without regarding the demands of justice; and have stated that if it is the glory of a man to pass by a transgression, it is impious to deny this to the Supreme Being. But how absurd is it to make the conduct of a private individual liable to error, a model for the procedure of the King Eternal! To act in this manner would make the claims of his law nugatory, encourage the rebellion of his subjects, expunge from his name its most splendid titles, and tarnish his glory as the just Governor of the world. The sages of the heathen world had their attention turned to this subject for ages, yet after all their speculations, the question was asked with as much anxiety as ever, "Where-with shall I come before the Lord?" As for the schemes of modern infidels, with whatever confidence they are brought forward, they are equally offensive to the enlightened mind, and as unsatisfactory to the trembling heart. Oh! that man, conscious of his own inability to devise a method, or to make an effort for his own redemption, would welcome that revelation which discloses the manifold wisdom of God, and which causes hope to shine in the scene of despair, and salvation to bless where all was lost.

Rejoice, Christians, that in the mediation of your Saviour these attributes are glorified. In his sufferings the justice of God is fully vindicated, and obtains satisfaction to all its claims in a victim so noble, and so voluntary. Rather than God's law should be degraded, his only begotten Son descends to answer its claims; and not the least abatement is either solicited or made. While justice continues to punish the transgressor, we are certain its demands are unanswered; but when the sword of Jehovah returned to its scabbard, and our Surety was taken from prison and from judgment, we know that "the Lord is well pleased for his righteous-

ness sake, and that he hath magnified the law and made it honourable." Truth found in the Surety, all its threats executed, and all its pledges redeemed. All the wrath denounced against the vessels of mercy was inflicted on this Sufferer, and all the prefigurations of redemption were completely realized. Mercy now flows without restraint. It is gratified in the bestowal of the best gift of heaven; it relieves where it pitied, and saves what was lost. If the pleasure of the good in acts of mercy, and the lustre of their beneficence is heightened in proportion to the severity of the distress relieved, what must be the delight of the Father of mercies, and what the glory of his compassion, in delivering millions from the lowest hell! Mercy, like the good father, welcomes the returning prodigal; and to those who would state his follies as a reason why no favour should be shown to him, can make this answer, "Let us rejoice and be glad, for this my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found."

Peace reconciles the world. Its overtures of reconciliation can now be made to the sinner, and the olive branch taken from the cross is lifted up among the nations. The rainbow appears in the clouds the symbol of peace, and the pledge of safety; and the trembling sinner is assured that "God is just, while he justifies the ungodly who believe in Jesus."

You are now, I trust, adoring the wisdom of God which shines in this harmony. In this scheme of redemption you see what God alone could contrive, and in this work what God alone could accomplish. Let it be your prayer with Moses, "I beseech thee shew me thy glory;" and at the communion table may he do for you what he did for him while he abode in the cleft of the rock. He now proclaims his name, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffer-

ing, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, keeping mercy for thousands, and that will by no means clear the guilty." You hear that name proclaimed with those mingled feelings of reverence and love, of pious confidence and holy awe which it demands ; for you know that the vengeance which it threatens was inflicted on your Surety, and that the mercy which it displays will reign to your eternal life. " We adore, O God, the justice and the judgment which are the habitation of thy throne, while we rejoice in the mercy and the truth which go before thy face."

After the Service.

Rejoice, Christians, that the harmony which has been thus established shall never be interrupted. We often find that when the opposite claims of men at variance have been adjusted, and a reconciliation established, which it is hoped will be permanent, some occurrence renews the hostility, and renders all that was done before unavailing. But there was nothing which had a tendency to mar this harmony which was not foreseen by Jehovah, and which he could not control and over-rule. No caprice can make him dissatisfied with this arrangement, for he is of one mind, and who can turn him? What can justice demand after such precious blood, or mercy ask in addition to so great a salvation? The sins into which good men fall cannot subvert this harmony, for it is impossible for them, with their principles and habits, to live under the power of iniquity. " He that is born of God sinneth not ;" he doth not sin habitually, for his seed remaineth in him. Mercy will for ever rejoice in the happiness of those for whose misery her soul was grieved ; Justice

in the salvation of those who are made the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus ; peace in the friendship that is sealed by the blood of the everlasting covenant, and truth in the homage which experience will thus address to her : “ We know with all our heart, and with all our soul, that not one good thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord our God hath spoken concerning us.”

In this harmony the other attributes of God are exhibited in their brightest glory. The sovereignty of God is most apparent in it, for no such meeting took place after the ruin of angels. Peace took not a single step to bring back those exiles from outer darkness ; nor did mercy ever heave one sigh over their wretchedness. And it is only for some of our race that mercy struggled, and for some of them only that justice is satisfied. It exhibits Jehovah also as wonderful in counsel : and this is surely the language of your hearts in contemplating this scene, “ How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God.” Man’s happiness springs from the Saviour’s agony, and by the most atrocious crime that ever was committed, the expiation of sin is effected. As to the holiness of God, it is most evident in the motives which this scene presents to avoid what is evil, and to follow what is good, and which rouse in the highest degree our gratitude and fear.

Trust, Christians, in these perfections of your God. His justice will deny you nothing which Jesus hath purchased for you, and he will shew that he delights in mercy, by exceeding all your wishes. In every dark dispensation you must believe that his paths are mercy and truth. “ Although thou sayest thou dost not see him, yet judgment is before him, therefore trust thou in him.” Whatever charges are brought against you, and at whatever bar you may be called to stand, this

is your comfort, "It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again." In all the perplexities of your lot, the wisdom of God will direct you; and he that walketh uprightly, walketh surely. When opposite claims are made on you, and when opposite courses are suggested to you, he will lead you in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. He will make you find advantage to your soul in outward misfortune, pleasure in weeping for sin, respect in humility, spiritual vigour in dying daily, communion in solitude, and usefulness on earth in a conversation in heaven. "I will lead the blind in ways they know not, and in paths they have not trode; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight." When your hearts are overwhelmed with perplexity, you see to what Counsellor you can apply for direction; and while he brands with folly the wisdom of the world, he can make the heart of the simple to understand knowledge, and ordain strength from the mouth of babes. Let the views you have now taken confirm your faith in your religion, and strengthen your attachment to it. It is the only system which shews these perfections in harmony in Jehovah's conduct to sinners. The enemies of the gospel can find no way of avoiding the difficulty but by denying the punitive justice of God, and palliating the malignity of sin, as if man could be saved to God's dishonour; but ye know, that while man is saved, Jehovah is glorified in the highest. "Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it; shout, ye lower parts of the earth, break forth into singing, ye mountains, and forests, and every tree that is therein, for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel."

Let the justice of God be honoured by you as well.

as his mercy. God has glorified it in the agonies and the blood of his own Son, and he calls on you to contemplate it with reverence and adoration. You may study its most tremendous threatenings, and mark its most destructive displays without slavish dread. While these are hateful to the wicked, ye can glory in them; and you cannot cherish the wish that one of these denunciations had been suppressed, or that one of these judgments had not been executed. The sceptre of righteousness is stretched out, that you may touch it in humble confidence, and adore him as a just God and a Saviour.

Let these excellencies be united in your temper and conduct. It is this union which forms the peculiar beauty of the Christian character. Mercy will soften the sternness of justice, and justice will keep mercy from giving away that to which others may have a claim, and preserve it from that indiscriminate indulgence by which indolence and vice are encouraged. Our Lord places judgment, mercy, and fidelity together, and represents them as the weightier matters of the law. Be willing to make sacrifices to maintain peace, and to restore it where it hath been broken, and be faithful to your vows to God, and to your promises to men. How opposite is the character of him who swears to his own hurt and changeth not, to him who violates his promises in every fit of caprice, in every change of circumstances, and at every suggestion of advisers.

Finally, Endeavour to persuade all to whom you have access, to comply with this method of salvation, and point out to them, for this purpose, what an aggravation it will be to their misery that all the movements of mercy could not soften them, that they would not be awed by all the terrors of justice, nor won by all

the overtures of peace. When I turn my eyes from your happy condition, to whose eternal life grace is reigning through righteousness, and contemplate the vessels of wrath fitting themselves for destruction, the thought strikes me, Perhaps peace is now addressing to them its last invitation, and mercy is shedding over them its last tear. May the disobedient be turned to the wisdom of the just, and may the injurious obtain salvation; and may you, ye disciples of Jesus, know in your happy experience, that “the mercy of the Lord is to everlasting on them that fear him, and his righteousness to their children’s children, even to such as keep his covenant, and obey his commandments.”

ADDRESS VIII.

LUKE IV. 18, 19.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.”

THESE words were read by our Lord from the prophecies of Isaiah in the synagogue of Nazareth. To this passage he was directed by the Holy Spirit, as peculiarly descriptive of his office and character. It was read by him in a manner so full of majesty and grace, that the deepest impression was made on the assembly. The language he now employs must not be considered as the exaggerated description of an ardent imagina-

tion, and as requiring such limitations as are necessary in explaining the bold and lofty figures of the Eastern style, for all that is here predicted he hath in the fullest sense realized.

Our Lord was anointed to preach glad tidings to the poor, and consider how, in the course of his ministry, he fulfilled this end of his mission. Among the multitudes who crowded to hear him publishing salvation, we seldom read of the scribes or the rulers mingling. They either regarded him with scorn, or persecuted him with implacable malignity; but the common people heard him gladly, and to them he made known the way of salvation in the most interesting manner. Instead of lessons fraught with foolish traditions, or worship consisting of empty forms, and a morality in which the heart had no place, his discourses were fraught with the purest and most attractive wisdom, and the law was explained by him in all its spirituality, and in all its extent.

To the poor was the gospel preached by his apostles, and it is chiefly among them that it is received in every age. Prosperity and grandeur cherish those proud and selfish dispositions which induce men to turn away with disgust from the humbling doctrines and spiritual nature of religion; while the poor find in them a sweet solace under all the evils of their condition, and an effectual preservative from that spirit of envy and discontent, which is the worst curse of poverty, and from every deed of fraud and injustice.

How different, in this view, does our Lord appear from the teachers of the heathen world. They went not out to "the high ways and hedges, to the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind," but they declaimed in groves, in halls, and in temples, on topics in which the greater part of mankind could feel no inte-

rest, and from which they could derive little advantage ; but Jesus had compassion on the multitude, and wherever he saw them, addressed to them the words of eternal life, with a condescension which regarded their abject condition with pity, and a patience which all their prejudices could not exhaust.

You profess that you have received the gospel, but it becomes you to examine yourselves if you have submitted to that method of salvation which it exhibits ; if you are willing to yield your whole hearts to its influence, and if you possess that poverty of spirit on which Christ pronounces his first blessing.

Jesus also was anointed to heal the broken-hearted. Behold him comforting the widow of Nain, and restoring her only son to her ; displaying in the house of mourning at Bethany the most soothing pity, and cheering the drooping hearts of the penitent with the assurance of forgiveness. And this is the charge which he gives to his servants, “ Comfort the feeble minded ;” and his blood is the balm which is poured into their wounds. On the workings of the contrite heart the Saviour looks with compassion, the tears which it prompts he puts into his bottle, and for the sighs which it heaves his ear is open. Some have gloried in the hearts which they have broken, but Jesus triumphs in those which he hath healed. Ye mourners in Zion, listen to the words in which Jesus invites you to approach him : “ Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” When Hannah prayed before the Lord with sighs and groans which could not be uttered, Eli, in a rash and cruel manner, charged her with intoxication ; and she answered him, “ I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit, I have neither drunk wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord. Count not thine

handmaid for a daughter of Belial ; for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto." But never did Jesus send away the child of sorrow from his throne or his table with harsh upbraidings. " He delivers our eyes from tears, our souls from death, and our feet from falling."

Christ was anointed to preach deliverance to the captives, and to set at liberty them that are bruised. It has been remarked by expositors, that there is an allusion here to the state of some captives in the East who were cast into prison, deprived of their sight, and loaded with heavy chains. And so deep was the dungeon in which guilty sinners were lying, so weighty the chains of their wicked habits and passions, and so powerful and stern their oppressor, that our release seemed hopeless. But when Jesus comes and says to the prisoners, " Go forth," their doors open, their chains fall off, their keeper is confounded, and they arise and follow their Saviour ; he hath freed multitudes from the power of avarice and sensuality, malignant prejudice and black despair. And such is the influence of his religion, that wherever it comes in its power, it checks injustice and oppression in every form, and prompts every act of condescension and kindness. He hath made you free from the law of sin and death, and ye are come to celebrate his grace and power, who took you from the fearful pit, and the miry clay ; and I call on you to reflect how poor he became that he might gladden you with these good tidings ; that his soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death, that he might heal the broken-hearted ; and that he was bound with cords, and nailed to the cross, that he might obtain for you the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

After the Service.

The Lord Jesus was anointed to preach recovering of sight to the blind. In the days of his personal ministry he opened the eyes of several blind persons, and by the power of his grace, he did and still does open the eyes of the understanding. How great was the joy felt by those whose eyes Christ opened, when they beheld the sun walking in brightness, the fields covered with verdure, the little hills rejoicing on every side, and the varied results of human skill and industry ; but it cannot be compared to their rapture to whom Jesus makes known grace in its riches, salvation in its blessings, holiness in its excellence, and heaven in its glory. Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear. When you contrast the ignorance, the doubts, and the errors under which you once laboured, with that light and truth with which you have been favoured, you must feel the liveliest gratitude to Him who hath shined into your heart, and a pleasure which human wisdom can never inspire.

The eyes which the Saviour's power opened he permitted the hand of death to close, but the soul which he has enlightened shall pass at death into a state where its knowledge and its bliss shall be perfect.

Our Lord was anointed also to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. There is an obvious allusion here to the year of Jubilee. At the return of every fiftieth year, the bond-servant was restored to the rights and blessings of freedom, and the inheritances which any had been obliged to part with were then recovered. This was an emblem of that redemption which is proclaimed by the Gospel to the slaves of corruption, of the return of the prodigal to his

Father's house, and of the call of the children of wrath to an inheritance which fadeth not away. Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound. There are some who despise this year of the Lord, and who boast that an age of reason is commencing, which will be the most auspicious the world has ever enjoyed. But the aim of such men is to banish every feeling and every rite adapted to purify or elevate our nature, to subvert every institution essential to the order and the peace of society, and to extinguish every hope that cheers the bed of sickness, or brightens the gloom of the grave. This result of infidelity is not mere speculation. It has been seen in projects and in deeds which will never be forgotten. They will be remembered to repress the presumption of daring impiety, to expose the falsehood of its pretexts, and to shew that all that is valuable in social life must stand or fall with the institutions of the Gospel.

After this review of the Saviour's ministry, you feel, I trust, a stronger impression of his excellence and grace. The instructors and the deliverers of men cannot be compared to this Prophet and Saviour, either in the importance of the blessings which they bestowed, or the manner in which they are communicated. "Unto you that believe he is precious." And while the thoughtless and the profane say to him, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," ye will glory in him, as eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, the friend of the oppressed, and the father of the poor; the blessings of those ready to perish for ever shall come upon him, and to him every knee shall bow.

Happy are ye on whom the beneficent objects of the Saviour's ministry have been accomplished. Let such cherish the sentiment of the Psalmist,

“The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver.” He may suffer you to feel some pangs of grief and fear, to teach you a continued reliance on his sacrifice, and a holy sobriety and caution in your whole conduct. He hath freed you from chains whose iron entered into your souls, and hath disposed you to submit to the mild and salutary discipline of religion. Under the impulse and the guidance of the pious, and the kind affections you walk at liberty. He hath filled you with the light of the knowledge of his glory, and given you the certain hope of a blessed eternity. Wherever you cast your eyes, you behold in his efforts for your happiness, motives of gratitude and grounds of rejoicing.

Let me call on you, in your various situations, to the imitation of those offices of the Saviour, in as far as it is competent for you. Beware of treating the poor with neglect or scorn in religious assemblies, or in the intercourse of life, but exert yourselves to promote their instruction and comfort. The institutions which have been formed for promoting wisdom and piety among the poor, have, by the Bibles and treatises which they have distributed, and by the instruction which they have imparted to the young, formed many, in the lower classes, to the best principles and habits, who would otherwise have perished for lack of knowledge. Let the broken-hearted, instead of being dragged to scenes of gaiety, or subjected to reproach and abuse, be treated with tenderness, and led to the Saviour, who comforts them that are cast down. In the spirit of our Lord, labour “to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke.” The exertions which have been made for the abolition of slavery, and the efforts of the humane, to deliver unfortunate debtors from pri-

son, and to restore them to their families, their labours, and their place in society, are noble testimonies of the power of the Gospel. Your charity is sometimes solicited by persons who have lost their sight by disease, or by accident, and to it they have peculiar claims. And most deserving of the support of Christians, are the institutions where the indigent blind obtain lodging and food, where the gloom of their condition is brightened by the employment to which they are led by a beneficent ingenuity, and by the cheering lessons of Christian instruction.

In a word, value the Gospel as you ought ; maintain a conversation that becomes it, and pray for the announcing of this year of the Lord to those who are sitting in darkness, and in the region of the shadow of death. The sound of this trumpet drowns the clamours of guilt, soothes the troubled spirit, and raises the sinking heart to ecstasy. “ How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publishes peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation.”

ADDRESS IX.

JOHN XIX. 5.

“ Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, behold the man !”

IT is seldom that the dying criminal is made the object of derision, or that the execution of the sentence of the law has been associated with aught that is ludi-

cious. The dignity of justice would be degraded by such low arts, and feelings excited in the spectators directly opposite to those of compassion for the sufferer and horror at his crime. But in our Lord's last sufferings, he was subjected to various insults. Unawed by the mild majesty of his look, and regardless of the powerful evidence of his innocence, they heaped upon him every indignity which their insolence and barbarity could suggest. Among other insults, they platted a crown of thorns, and placed it on his head, and put on him a purple robe. This was done in impious derision of his claims to royalty, and thus was he insulted whom God had set king on his holy hill of Zion, and to whom every knee should bow. The large thorns in this crown pierced our Lord's temples, and were driven deeper into his flesh by the blows with which they smote him, yet neither indignity nor pain excited the least impatience, or produced a single complaint. There are some to whom insult is more intolerable than injury; and it is so to those who have been accustomed to marks of respect, and who are conscious that they deserve different treatment; but though our Lord had received the homage of angels, and was entitled to the highest estimation of mortals, yet did he bear their scorn in silence, for the magnanimity which endured the cross could despise the shame.

It was a part of the curse denounced against man after the fall, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake, thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee;" and his head is pierced with thorns, who is made a curse for us to redeem us from the curse of the law. This indignity and pain our Lord endured, because the crown had fallen from our heads which the Creator had placed on it, and because the robe of innocence was rent in pieces in which he had arrayed us. Bright was

that crown, and fair was that robe ; there was nought in paradise which could equal them in splendour and beauty, yet by one act of dreadful infatuation, they were madly thrown away, and the lord of the work of God's hands became the slave of sin, and the object of the curse.

Jesus wore this crown and this robe to expiate the guilt of our rebellion against God, and that he might win your affectionate homage, and purchase for you the garments of salvation and the crown of glory. He might have left you to the shame and the misery which were the consequence of your yielding to the suggestions of the devil, and reserved his favours for angels who never offended him ; but he gloried to repair the breaches of many generations, and to save those who were children of wrath. It was thus that he obtained for you the wedding garment you now wear, and the crown of righteousness laid up for you in heaven. With this crown and robe on him, Pilate brings him forth to the people, in order to melt their hearts in pity, and while the blood was trickling down from his temples, and exquisite pain was felt by him in his back and shoulders, which had been torn by the scourge, he cries, " Behold the man." Look at him and say if you can desire that he should suffer more. How relentless must their malice have been which this could not satiate, and which would not say it is enough till he expired on the cross.

Nothing gives a more shocking view of the heart of the infidel than the fact, that this call of Pilate has been made the watchword of the scoffer, and the title of books filled with impious sarcasm. Depraved must be that understanding, and black must be that heart, which can select such a motto for its profanity, and look to a suffering Saviour only to revile him. The spread of

such blasphemy is like the pestilence walking in darkness. The virulence of infidelity has been excited to a great degree, by the wide diffusion of the Redeemer's name, but it shall not be in her power to pluck one jewel from his crown, to expunge one article from our creed, or to pervert one real disciple.

Let us turn our thoughts from such children of the wicked one, to the hearts that are bleeding with sorrow and love, and to such I say, "Behold the man." Behold the man, in whom more of God is to be seen than in any angel or human being, for in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; who passed by the nature of angels and took hold of yours; and in whom humanity appears more bright and lovely than it did in paradise. Excellencies which the first Adam could not exhibit, adorn the second, and constitute in their exercise a part of that obedience by which you are made righteous.

Behold the man of sorrows whom grief attended in every step of his course, and in every moment of his life, and whom it covered with its darkest gloom, and tore with its sharpest pangs in the garden and on the cross. Now Christians, you cannot surely see him thus set forth before you, without wonder at his condescension and gratitude for his love. Let the souls whom he has blessed and saved, strew their garments in his way, and crown him in adoring homage. O let there not be reason to say, that his enemies were more eager to dishonour than we are to exalt him. Let your blessings rest where malignity and insolence fixed this crown, and let every eye look to him with ardent love and eager expectation.

After the Service.

REJOICE, Christians, that a very different crown and robe are now worn by your Lord. He hath a crown of purest gold, whose lustre is never tarnished, and to which the mightiest of his enemies shall be constrained to bow. His raiment is white as the light, and "all his garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces." It is said, after Mordecai's triumph over the craft and malice of Haman, "that he went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple, and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad, and the Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour." And we have much more reason to rejoice in his exaltation who was abased for our sake, and who is enthroned for our salvation. The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice in the advantages it derives from the diffusion of his religion, the virtues of his disciples, and the gifts of his liberality; and let the church be glad that he is head over all things for the advancement of her interests, and that the condescension and indulgence which he displayed on earth, it is his delight to manifest in a higher sphere.

Think what this exaltation of your Lord claims from you. It is this, that you should serve him in holiness and righteousness all the days of your lives. You feel, I trust, that you can refuse nothing to such a master, and that you can withhold nothing from such a friend. Let his love reign in your hearts, and let his life be manifest in yours.

Beware of expecting honour from men. Your Saviour

was thus treated, to teach you to bear in silence the scorn of cruel pride, and if your Lord was crowned with thorns, you have no reason to complain that they are strewn in your path, or planted in your pillow. Be thankful that they are so few, and that the pain they give you is not more severe. Turn not aside from the path of duty on account of them, for "thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and take for a covering to your heads, that hope of salvation which no thorn can pierce.

Look not with envy on any worldly glory. Amid the multitude of rose leaves, you see not the thorns, but the wearer feels them, and you behold the purple robe, but you see not the lacerated heart beneath it. It would check that envy and discontent, by which the poor make themselves miserable, were they to reflect on the miseries which find a way to the house of feasting, and to the scene of triumph, and that the prosperous may have thoughts more vexing, and nights more sleepless than theirs.

Let me call on you to continue looking unto Jesus. Amid the scorn of the wicked, a pious regard to Jesus will make you despise their abuse. Their scorn is no proof that the object of it is contemptible, nor is their censure any evidence that the act which they condemn is wicked. Be less solicitous about what the world will think of you, and more eager to shew yourselves approved to God.

When you are forced to view characters that are disgraceful to human nature, look to him who was its fairest ornament. When your hearts are disgusted and shocked by the impieties of the profane, the excesses of the sensual, and the cruelties of the malignant, consider him who was so eminent in devotion, in purity,

and in beneficence, and you will feel a complacency, which is both improving and delightful.

In pressing on to perfection, behold the man "who was altogether lovely." Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and labour till your last moment, that you may be conformed to his image. You must hate the crown of pride, and the garment that is spotted by the flesh, and be able to say with Job, "I put on righteousness, and it clothed me, and my judgment was as a robe and a diadem." And in the hour of death may you see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. In that hour when the failing eye can scarcely discern the face of friendship any longer, and when every worldly scene is vanishing from the view, it must be truly delightful to have a faith which can see our Lord in his beauty, and behold the better country as not afar off but near.

In the day of judgment, when every eye shall see the Son of Man in his glory, it will not be through the tears of regret and dismay, that you shall behold him, but with eyes sparkling with triumphant gladness. And in the world of glory, every eye shall be fixed on him as the perfection of beauty and as the fountain of life. In that world there is a crown reserved for you which fadeth not away, and which is attended by no anxieties and fears. "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels." He will delight to honour all to whom he is precious, and to give the garments of praise for the sackcloth of holy grief.

Now let this be your purpose, before you leave this spot, "I will look to the Lord, I will wait for the God

of my salvation ;” and this is the parting injunction of your Saviour, an injunction, whose influence must make every effort seem easy, and lessen the terrors of every peril. “ Be thou faithful to the death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

ADDRESS X.

JOHN XIX. 17, 18.

“ And he, bearing his cross, went forth into a place, called The Place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew, Golgotha ; where they crucified him.”

THE place where eminent men have died is generally marked with care. Almost every man is anxious to discover the precise spot where they drew their last breath, and took their final leave of the world. The interest which we feel in such places is always proportioned to the celebrity of their characters, to the cause in which they were engaged, and to the share which we have in the consequences of their struggles. How sacred is the spot where the martyr died, and where his last testimony was given to the cause of truth, and to the rights of conscience ! No man of principle and feeling can behold it without catching new ardour in defence of religious liberty, a livelier gratitude for our tranquil state, and a stronger abhorrence of that proud and cruel intolerance, which condemns and punishes opposition to its views and wishes as the worst of crimes.

Christians, we now lead you to the spot where Jesus

was crucified. It was the hill Golgotha, or the place of skulls. Many malefactors had been sacrificed there to the justice of their country. There would be a diversity in the crimes for which they suffered, yet this variety was of itself a mournful proof of the extent of human depravity, and the power of malignant and covetous passions. Some of them might die in penitential sorrow, and others in sullen obduracy, but their life was demanded by the laws which they had violated. But how different is the victim that now bleeds. It is the Lamb without spot and blemish that is now sacrificed to the justice of God. And shall the righteous be as the wicked? In this case, "he that knew no sin was made sin for us." The Lord laid on him, with his own full, free, and generous consent, the iniquities of us all, that we might be justified by his blood. The place selected for our Lord's death, was not a spot hallowed by the symbols of God's presence, by the worship of the pious, or by their translation to glory; but gloomy, by the tokens of the divine vengeance, and by the horrible despair and terrors of the wicked. No, was the death which he underwent easy and tranquil but a death appropriated to the worst criminals, and attended with lingering and exquisite pain. And all this was done, because to him our guilt was imputed, and he was treated as we deserved.

Here the trophies of death lay scattered around, The king of terrors seemed to expose here, in triumphant exultation, the bodies which he had broken and disfigured; and no place could be better suited to signalize the victory of the Prince of life, and to give the decisive blow to the last enemy. It was not merely in his territories, but in the heart and strength of his empire, that he was assaulted and vanquished. Some of these victims of death might maintain a longer strug-

gle with him than others, but all had fallen. Here bones were heaped on bones, and dust on dust, the poor remains of what was once the seat of intelligence and comeliness; yet here Jesus abolished death, expiated sin, by which it had entered into the world, and purchased a nobler life than that which was forfeited.

The Jewish sacrifices were offered in the temple, but this oblation was not to be limited like theirs to a single people, but was to be a propitiation for the sins of the world. "Jesus, that he might sanctify the people with his blood, suffered without the gates of Jerusalem." The blessings of Christ's death are not limited by years, situation, or circumstances, by human bigotry or by human prejudice, but extend, wide as the expanded love of the generous sufferer, to infancy and to age, to the poor and to the rich, to the civilized and to the savage, to islands and continents, to rival sects, and to the chief of sinners. It is strange that men should have taken delight in the idea of the exclusion of any of their fellow creatures from the virtue of the cross, and imagine that they were honouring the God, whose benevolence is infinite, by the anathemas of their own malignity. This is the view of the death of our Lord, which Caiaphas was directed to deliver, though he understood not the import of his prediction, and would not have relished it if he had. He prophesied, "that Jesus should die not for that nation only, but to gather together in one, the children of God that were scattered abroad.

It was, that multitudes might feast their eyes with the spectacle, that the Son of Man was crucified on this elevated spot. And he submitted to it, to show that for you he was not ashamed to suffer, and that he wishes all the ends of the earth to look to him and to be saved. When Isaac ascended the mount, he was

not aware of the intention of his father, nor of the fate that awaited him, but Jesus knew this perfectly, and it was this which made him go up, not merely with resignation but with alacrity. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

To him I trust you are now looking. Your hearts are at the spot where he suffers, and it has been by the cords of his love, and by the attractions of his cross, that you have been drawn and will be kept there.

After the Service.

THE Apostle's exhortation to the Hebrews, from the view which he had given them of the place where Christ suffered, was this, "Let us, therefore, go out to him without the camp bearing his reproach." Well might he call the Hebrews to renounce the rites and ceremonies which Christ had abrogated, to rise superior to that foolish bigotry which made them doat on a temple which he would not honour with the noblest act of his priesthood, and to cultivate a liberality of spirit, worthy of the disciples of a Master whose death was so extensive in its object and influence. The apostle considered that it would be a glorious proof of the benevolence and power of the Gospel, were they to lay aside their long cherished prejudices, and to walk in enlightened candour and love to all. It was to no mortal leader, however famous, that he called them to go out, but to Christ, to whom it is good to draw near, and to whom it is our safety to cleave. They might be calumniated for acting in this manner; but how animating is the thought "it is his reproach," and the Spirit of God and of glory will rest upon you.

Let it be your care to separate yourselves from the follies, and the pollutions of the world, their loose max-

ims, and their pernicious ways. Shew that ye are not of the world, even as Christ was not of it. Regulate not your creed by their maimed and perverted Christianity, nor your conduct by their low standard of morals, but be valiant for the truth as it is in Jesus, and for that pure and undefiled religion, which keeps a man unspotted from the world. Put away every childish thing, every superstitious idea, and all the tendencies of the spirit of this world, and seeing ye have professed yourselves this day to be strangers and pilgrims on the earth, "pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." The pilgrim, intent on his journey, doth not set his heart on any object by which he passes, and it is not in the hut where he reposes for a night that he finds a home; and let your conversation be in heaven. The disappointments, and troubles, and alarms of the world, which are so painful to you, are sent with this message of mercy to prevent those attachments to earthly things, which would be your ruin; "Arise, depart ye, this is not your rest, for it is polluted." Can you consider it as a hardship to quit any object or scene when Jesus thus addresses you, "Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon, from the lions' dens and the mountains of leopards." The world may reproach you as austere and precise, but Christ will own you as his peculiar people. Let every visit which you pay to the church-yard remind you of Golgotha. When we attend the funerals of our friends, we often see bones and skulls scattered by the sides of the grave. How solemn are the meditations which are excited by thus seeing the remains of bodies which we have often beheld fresh and comely with health and vigour; and how painful are the feelings which are awakened in some, in beholding the skulls and bones of those who were the desires of their hearts,

and in being thus forced to reflect, that soon their skulls shall be as naked, and hideous, and senseless, as these, that their ashes shall be treated with as little ceremony, and that mourners shall be at their grave for another but not for them. But Jesus went to the place of skulls, and though he was not buried there, he died there, and his death gives us an ample security that the body shall be raised from the ruins of the grave to glory and immortality.

When we think on the millions of men that have died on this earth, we may call it the place of skulls. It is the land of the dying and of the dead. How much of the earth on which we tread once teemed with life. If there was a region on this earth where death could not seize, what multitudes would flock to it, and what sacrifices would be made to obtain the poorest place of residence in it ; but of every spot in this globe it may be said, "What man is he that liveth here and shall not see death, and who shall deliver his soul from the power of the grave?" But there is a land of the living on high, where there is no more death, where man is no more dust, and his body shall be no more vile, where it is clothed with eternal life, and where the ensigns of mortality are for ever unknown. To that land let your hearts rise, advance daily nearer to it in your holy attainments ; and if ye have tasted this day that the Lord is gracious, it is a pledge that you shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

Consider your life as a passage to the grave, and remember that you must go to it, like your Lord, bearing your cross. It belongs to your God to appoint your particular cross, and every man hath his own burden. Some, by the death of the young, who were the hope of their families, are made to say, "I shall go down to

the grave to my son mourning ;” others by the misconduct of their friends, are filled with the contempt of the proud ; some, by the straits and anxieties of poverty, find their life made bitter ; and others, whose worldly circumstances are prosperous, are unhappy by fear and melancholy. But consider that your cross will render the grave more welcome, where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest. Jesus suffered, being tried, that he might know how to succour the afflicted, and his strength shall be made perfect in your weakness. Jesus was led to Golgotha by cruel hands, but he himself will lead you gently ; and the feeble and the staggering, the timid and the sickly, he will encourage, uphold, and animate. You shall carry your cross to the grave, and leave it there for ever, and while in it the flesh rests in hope, your spirits shall soar to the Zion above, “ where they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

ADDRESS XI.

JOHN XIX. 23, 24.

“ Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, (and made four parts, to every soldier a part,) and also his coat. Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be ; that the Scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots.”

IT was usual to distribute the garments of crucified persons among the soldiers who were employed in the

crucifixion, and it was wisely ordered that this should be done to those of our Lord. Had any remarkable interposition of Providence secured them to his friends, it might have been supposed that there was something sacred about them, and they might have been regarded with a superstitious veneration. We know how the church of Rome hath honoured supposed fragments of these garments, and ascribed miraculous virtues to these fancied relics; and to guard his disciples from such folly, they were left to the will of the four soldiers by whom he was crucified. Your Saviour hath left real memorials of himself in the records of his doctrine, in the graces of his character, and in the fruits of his spirit, and these you cannot too highly prize. You have felt their virtue in the victories which they have enabled you to gain over temptation, in the moral health which they have imparted, and in the hopes which they have inspired.

This circumstance suggests the most important lessons to you. Hereby a very remarkable prophecy in the 22d Psalm was accomplished. It was the omniscience of God alone which could enable David, nearly eleven hundred years before it, to foretel that the Messiah should die by a mode of execution not practised in Judea, and that lots should be cast for his garments, a circumstance depending on the humour of the men that crucified him. Prophecy never stooped to say what would be done with the robes of Herod, or the imperial purple of the Cesars, when they were no more, but it describes minutely the fate of the garments of the meek and lowly Jesus. This was done, that in the fulfilment of this prediction, an argument for the divinity of our religion might be presented, obvious to every capacity, and satisfactory to every candid mind. How serious and important is our hope for eternity, and, blessed

be God ! it rests on the Rock of ages, and amidst the craft of infidel sophistry, and the scorn and abuse of the profane, it continues to purify and to bless the souls of the faithful.

Contemplate the humiliation of your Redeemer. He who covers the heavens with clouds, and clothes the fields with verdure, is stript of his garments, and sees them become the prey of the men of violence ; and this indignity he endured with the same meekness and patience with which he bore the other insults which attended his crucifixion. No insult could provoke him to wrath, and no cruelty impel him to a single expression or deed of revenge. It was by thus humbling himself to the death of the cross, that he obtained for you the best robe, that righteousness which covers all your sins, which secures your acceptance with the Judge of all, which delivers you from all the misgivings and tremors of guilt, and calls you to the brightest hopes of heaven and eternity.

The outer robe of Jesus was divided into four parts, and be thankful that the merits of his righteousness are extensively applied, and that their efficacy is felt, and their blessings are enjoyed in every quarter of the globe, in every variety of character, and in every diversity of condition.

These soldiers cast lots to whom his vest should belong, but his garment of salvation is brought within the view and the reach of all, and it is unto all, and upon all them that believe. Have you received this righteousness, and can you say, that, when conscious of the utter insufficiency of your own righteousness to save you from guilt and misery, and when you were hopeless and wretched, Jesus passed by you, and looked upon you, and spread his skirt over you, and covered you ; that he swore unto you and entered into cove-

nant with you, and you became his. That time of love, and that triumph of mercy, you can never forget, and I trust it is with adoring gratitude and fervid affection that you are now come to confess him as the Lord your righteousness. The wedding garment which you have on is of his providing, as well as the feast itself, and the smell of that garment is "like the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed."

After the Service.

Rejoice, Christians, that Christ hath obtained for you the garments of holiness; and of the church, as arrayed in these, the Psalmist thus speaks: "The king's daughter is all glorious within, and her clothing is of wrought gold." How poor seems the gorgeous apparel of king's houses, and the soft raiment of hypocrisy and worldly complaisance, when compared with this. The graces of the Spirit operating in the heart, and displayed in the exercises of worship, in the duties of life, and in the commerce of the world, form that moral beauty which God loves, and constitute the true excellence of man, not specious and transient, but solid and lasting.

Jesus hath sanctified the mean attire which his poor saints wear. It is not from inattention to your interests, or indifference to your comfort, that he allots you so scanty a portion of the world's advantages, but to keep you from vain glory, and to make you seek your happiness and your honour in better distinctions. The beggar may bless God for the rags that cover him, for they are more than he deserves, and more than was left to the crucified Saviour.

By this circumstance of his sufferings, Jesus hath

sanctified to his people the violence of persecutors, which has often stripped the righteous of their garments, and left them to perish in the cold. Meditation on the lot of Christ, will in such a condition work patience, and those of them whose backs are uncovered for the tormentor's lash, should remember that Christ was not only stripped for the scourge, but also for crucifixion.

Hereby our Lord has taught his people not to be solicitous about finery of apparel or costly array, but to adorn themselves with good works, and to be clothed with humility. There is a singularity in garb which some affect, which is so far from indicating humility, that it is the result of pride and obstinacy, and Christians are not to render themselves ridiculous by such austerity; but it is unworthy of them to be conformed to fashions improper and unsuitable, and to copy these with the eagerness and the solicitude of the children of vanity.

Our Lord hath taught us, by this circumstance, that lesson which he so often inculcated, to feed the hungry, and to clothe the naked. You may give a part of your own garments, or those of your children, to one needy object, and a part to another. It is unbecoming, Christians, to have heaps of unnecessary raiment stored up, while the poor are walking in rags around them. Job says, "If I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering; if his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep, then let mine arm be broken from the bone." The coats and garments which Dorcas made for the poor, were shewn by the widows to Peter, in the chamber where her remains were lying, and it was not the attire of vanity, but of beneficence. Poor children are peculiar objects

of compassion, and by pointing out to the young in your families, how different their attire is from that of many little boys and girls around them, you will effectually check their discontent, melt their hearts in pity, and teach them to relieve their indigent fellow creatures, in the most prudent and useful manner.

Our Lord has thus taught us to look forward to the period when our garments shall be parted, and when of all the apparel we may possess, nothing shall be allotted to us but a shroud, which corruption will soon destroy as well as the flesh it covers. How vain is all the pomp of this world, when its favourites, who were clothed in purple and scarlet, and fared sumptuously every day, must leave their wardrobe to the moth, and their carcasses to the worm. O that friends, when they are dividing the garments of dead relations, would recollect the parting of those of a crucified Saviour, and anticipate the period when in their winding sheet alone, they shall lie down in the grave!

Did these soldiers say of our Lord's seamless coat, "Let us not rend it," and shall not we be solicitous to maintain the unity of the church? Too long has it been torn by the corruptions of the loose, the novelties of the restless, and the violence of the headstrong. It is the will of Christ that there should be no schism in his body and that the unity of the Spirit should be kept in the bond of peace; and the ordinance of the Lord's supper is admirably adapted to expand our benevolent affections, and to destroy these prejudices and envyings by which the harmony of the church is broken. Arise from that table to walk in love, and to exemplify that happy union of purity and candour, of zeal and forbearance, which will adorn your profession, and conciliate the fierce and the contracted to the spirit of the Gospel.

And rejoice that Christ hath procured for you the robes of glory, to be worn for ever in that state in which inward felicity is associated with external splendour. He himself hath been arrayed in all the majesty and brightness which heaven can bestow, and for his sake, white robes shall be given to every one of you ; his own hand shall clothe you with these, and in them you shall worship and rejoice in his presence for ever.

SERMON II.

Christ forsaken by his Father.

MATT. XXVII. 46.

“ And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani ? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?”

THE language and conduct of eminent persons, under extraordinary and protracted sufferings, are an object of general curiosity. We are eager to know if they maintained in the hour of trial, the character which they supported through life, and if those principles, whose power they had strongly asserted, yielded them any consolation in their last agony. It is with such views that the death-bed of a saint has been anxiously watched, and that the martyr has been followed to the scaffold by those who wished to judge of religion by the influence which it exerted amidst the horrors of the scene. Every feature of his countenance is marked, every expression which he utters is remembered, and if they display the meekness, fortitude, and charity, which were apparent in his life, the conclusion is felt to be irresistible, that his heart is sincere, and that his religion is divine.

It is impossible for one who has read the history of our Lord's life, not to feel a strong desire to know in what manner and in what spirit he died ; and Pro-

yidence hath amply gratified this wish, and hath, in the sacred records, exhibitèd him leaving the world in circumstances which called forth such a bright display of various excellencies as give him stronger claims to our regard, our confidence, and our imitation. And this is done, not in the language of imagination, but in the simple statement of facts, whose importance required no colouring to give them power over the heart.

The Evangelists take us to the foot of the cross, and tell us all he said, and leave us from these expressions to conceive what he felt. How admirably was his conduct in suffering suited to his whole life! In his praying for the pardon of his murderers, we see that generosity operating, which had loaded his bitterest enemies with favours. In his committing his mother to the care of John, we see that filial piety which had ministered to Mary in all her sorrows, and in the salvation of the penitent thief, we behold the mercy which delighted to seek and to save the lost. In the text we have the fourth expression uttered by our Lord on the cross, and it is only a cold-hearted critic who could suggest or discuss the question, whether this complaint was consistent with the magnanimity and the patience for which he was distinguished. At this time he was enduring a degree of anguish never felt by him but once before in his agony in the garden; and the language in which he expresses his feelings is not that of passion or distrust, but of a heart utterly bereft of consolation, and of faith cleaving to Him who had withdrawn it. Never had patience such a trial, nor faith such a triumph. The sacred historian, by mentioning this circumstance, leads us to the bitterness of his death, and calls our attention from the blackness of the day, and the torture of the cross, to the darkness of his soul, and to the struggles of his heart. May the

Holy Spirit enlighten our minds in the knowledge of this mystery of suffering and of love, and excite in us the wonder, the gratitude, and the awe which it claims. Cheered as we are on this day by a light from heaven, and invited to meet with God at his table, it is fit that we think on the sorrows to which we owe this privilege, and all our hopes of being ever with the Lord.

In this discourse I shall call your attention to the important circumstances connected with this complaint; to its import; and to the reasons why our Lord expressed it.

I. Your attention is first called to the time at which our Lord uttered this complaint. It was about the ninth hour, or three o'clock in the afternoon. Our Lord had been nearly six hours suspended on the cross, and the darkness which covered all the land had lasted nearly three. During all that time he had endured the bereavement of which he now complains, and had borne it in silence. It was not when the first sensation of horror arose in his heart that he uttered it. There have been many instances in which men have been so stunned by the stroke of calamity, that a considerable time has elapsed ere they came to a full consciousness of their situation; but no faculty in our Lord was for one moment suspended. Every power of his nature was, during the whole scene, alive in peculiar sensibility to the feeling of pain. How soon is human patience exhausted, and how long seems the shortest period of agony to the sufferer! but Jesus opens not his mouth till the appointed moment, and thus hath taught us that a querulous temper in affliction ill becomes any of his followers, and that we ought to forbear the open expression of our anguish till the disclosure is required for some salutary end. We often see, that when men have borne suffering for a certain period, the mind becomes so far reconciled to it as to

feel it much more tolerable than it was at first; but such was the nature of our Lord's mental anguish, that it probably increased in severity, and it was now at its highest pitch when he uttered these words.

2. We are called on to notice the manner in which this complaint was made: "He cried with a loud voice." It is common for men in extreme anguish to signify their pain in this manner. Nature feels some relief from the disclosure, and from the hope that it will excite pity in those around. But our Lord thus cried not from any wish for human sympathy, but because it was adapted to make a deep and salutary impression on the minds of the Jews. They had heard from the lips of the crucified, complaints of the severity of their sentence, of the cruelty of men, and of the slowness of the approach of death; but this was a complaint which proceeded from no lips but those of Jesus. They saw in it the sufferer raising his views from earth, and from friends and foes on it, to the God whom he had served, and who had been his chief joy. They had often heard him speaking consolation to the afflicted, now his voice mourns as it had never done before, because his heart was breaking with grief never equalled.

3. This complaint was expressed in the language of Scripture. Our Lord took these words from the 22d Psalm. Prophecy had intimated that these words would be spoken by the Messiah, and in employing them he fulfilled what David had foretold. To him the word of God was precious, and it had a peculiar sweetness to his taste. Thus he recommends it to us to study the Scriptures, and to apply them to ourselves where they are adapted to our character and circumstances. How sweet is it to express our thanksgivings in the language of Scripture, and our grief in

its lamentations; and with great propriety is the 22d Psalm sung so frequently at the commemoration of Christ's death, since part of it was employed by him to express his sorrow during his crucifixion.

But our Lord employed this passage also, to show the Jews, that by applying to himself the language of prophecy respecting the Messiah, he still adhered to his claims to this character, and that he would not be intimidated from the open avowal of it by any torture which they could inflict. It was his dying testimony to the divinity of his mission, and when they read that Psalm, and remembered this circumstance, some of them were probably pierced to the heart in remorse and shame, for a deed which they had committed in strong delusion.

4. It was the only complaint which our Lord made. His language, "I thirst," was uttered in fulfilment of prophecy, and from no hope of relief; for when the vinegar was given him, and he had tasted thereof, he would not drink. He did not complain of any other circumstance in his sufferings. He did not cast his eye on the spot where he and his disciples had taken sweet counsel, and where they had promised eternal fidelity to him, and say, "Why have ye forsaken me?" He did not look down to the Jewish populace, who had so lately followed him with their hosannahs, and who had often urged him to accept of the throne and sceptre of Judah, and say, "Why have ye forsaken me?" He did not look to the angels who had received a charge to keep him in all his ways, and one of whom had strengthened him in his agony, and say, "Why have ye forsaken me?" No. Their absence gave him no pang, in comparison with that of his Father. With the light of his Father's countenance, he could bear unmoved the frowns of men, the

pains of death, and the rage of hell ; but without it, his heart must have been broken, though every human being had applauded him, though life had poured all its comforts around him, and though the powers of darkness had given him no molestation.

Our Lord did not repeat this complaint. In the garden he prayed thrice in the same words, that the cup might pass from him, but this complaint he did not renew. It was in itself an intimation that his anguish had now reached its extremity, and quickly was it succeeded by the shout of triumph, and by the surrender of his spirit into the hands of his Father. In a few moments the cloud was dispelled, and he sunk to rest in his Father's bosom.

5. It is a complaint accompanied by the language and the feelings of strong affection and unshaken faith. Many of the complaints of men contain the harshest reflections on the character and the procedure of the Almighty, and plainly indicate that they have no trust in his mercy, and no love to his name, and that they imagine that he has acted to them, not as a Father, but as a tyrant. But the suffering Redeemer claims Jehovah as his God, speaks as one conscious of unabated love to him, and repeats the claim, to show that whatever he might still have to endure, he would look up to him for his final rest and reward. There are in this complaint two expressions of appropriating faith for one of agonizing nature, and thus we see faith triumphant amidst the depression of humanity. Never was faith so tried, and never was faith so glorious. Thrice did he raise his cry to Jehovah on the cross, and in all these addresses faith and love employ their strongest and most tender expressions, occupy the chief place, and utter the first word in them all. This claim is made to

precede the complaint, to show that it was not the language of impatience or upbraiding, but of affection lamenting the absence of the Father, before whom he had from eternity rejoiced, yet eager to magnify the God who was humbling him to the dust. The faith of Job has been deservedly extolled, who amidst the ruin of his outward comforts, and while the poison of Jehovah's arrows was drinking up his spirit, could say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," yet it is unworthy to be compared with that maintained by our Lord while the Almighty was afflicting him in the day of his fierce anger.

II. Let us now consider the import of this complaint. On this topic many opinions have been stated which do not accord with the views of Scripture respecting the person and the atonement of Christ. Some have employed such language in accounting for it, as seems to convey the idea that the union betwixt the divine and the human nature in his person was dissolved, for they talk of the divinity withdrawing, that the humanity might suffer. But no separation betwixt them took place; for if it had, the sufferings of the human nature would have wanted that efficacy for our redemption, which they derive from the divine, nor could it, if left to itself, have sustained, for one instant, the heat of this great anger. Others have imagined that our Lord was at this time separated from the love of his Father, but that was impossible. If from the love of God nought can separate any pious soul, he could not be an outcast from his heart, who always did the things that pleased him. At that moment he was fulfilling his Father's pleasure, and glorifying him in the highest. Others have asserted, that no more is expressed by the complaint, than our Lord's grief at being delivered to the power of his enemies, and left so long to their rage,

and they adduce some texts where the phrase forsaken of God, hath this sense. But if this was all his grief, why did he not utter this complaint when he was first left in the hands of his enemies? It is absurd to suppose that he would lament this now, when in a few moments he was to be released from all the effects of their malice. It suggests a very low idea of our Lord's fortitude, to suppose that he would complain so bitterly even of the worst that men or devils could do. If human fortitude hath borne in silence torture of body as severe for hours, or broken it with no language but that of hope and triumph, shall we imagine that our divine Master was less intrepid in spirit, or less steadfast in patience? But I proceed to state what appears to me to be its true meaning.

1. This complaint intimates that our Lord was now utterly bereft of the consolations and joys of his Father's presence. The happiness which the gracious presence of God imparts, is asserted, by all who have ever enjoyed it, to be unequalled in power and sweetness. Good men have felt its comforts so delighting their soul in suffering, that their pain was forgotten, and the scene of trouble has seemed as the gate of heaven. Cheered by this, the affectionate heart has rejoiced in the spot which friendship used to bless with its kindest endearments, and hath felt no blank, though reminded by the loneliness of the scene, that lover and friend had left them never to return. The pious man hath sung on the couch of sickness, "the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song, and he also is become my salvation." From the smoke and flames of the stake, a voice has been heard which hath changed the horror of the spectators into wonder, "his left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me." But to Jesus Christ the joys of the Fa-

ther's presence must have been imparted in a higher degree, in consequence of his nearer relation to him, his brighter excellence of character, and because with him they could not be abused, as they too often are, by the best of men. To a heart like his, not vitiated by any earthly tendency, nor distracted by any principle seeking to itself a more agreeable indulgence, these joys must have been supremely dear. The influence which they had on our Lord may be seen in the ardour of his public ministry, and in his nights so often devoted to solitary prayer, when his Father's love blessing his soul, filled it with a rapture which drove sleep, languor, and weariness, from the bodily frame. Had these joys remained with him, he would have felt no gloominess of mind in the darkness, and no fear from all the efforts of earth or hell.

These joys were withdrawn from our Lord during his crucifixion, and not one gleam remained. In the toils and troubles of his life they had been his solace; amidst want and reproach, and the desertion of his attendants, they had supported his mind; but now the chief stay of his heart is gone. A few days before his crucifixion, he had enjoyed the most blissful manifestations of his Father's love on the mount of transfiguration, and the remembrance of this must have given additional horror to this hour of darkness. Instead of the bright sun and the white cloud of Tabor, he beheld the devouring fire and the black tempests of Sinai.

The feelings of Adam when driven from Paradise, and of the angels when expelled from heaven, could not be so painful as those of our Lord. Their depravity and enmity to God deadened their sense of the sweetness of that communion with Jehovah which they had lost; but while our Lord's heart was fully alive to all the bliss which the divine presence imparts, he is

bereft of it, and mourns the loss of it as the most dreadful bereavement he ever had experienced. And why was our Lord thus forsaken? It was to expiate the guilt of our apostacy from God, and to save us from everlasting destruction from his presence. This was the method which God devised for bringing back his banished children into his presence. It is by this desertion of our Lord, that we are brought nigh to God, that we are made to walk with him, that he can lift upon us the light of his countenance, and that we can cherish the hope of rising to his presence, “where there is fulness of joy, and to his right hand, where there are pleasures ever more.” O! let us think by what a sacrifice Christ obtained for us this happiness, and that he counted nothing too valuable to be relinquished to bring us to God.

2. The complaint intimates, that our Lord was now suffering the severest inflictions of his Father’s anger. Some writers have represented this as impossible, and have reprobated this idea in strong language. They have asked, could the righteous Lord, who loves righteousness, and who beholds the upright with a pleasant countenance, be wroth with one so entirely devoted to his service, and so eminent in all that is pious and benevolent? To this objection, it is a sufficient answer, that our Lord had voluntarily assumed the character of the substitute of the sinner, and had engaged to suffer all the wrath which he deserved. And as the desert of sin is not merely exclusion from the presence of God, but includes the positive effects of his anger, men could not be saved, unless Jesus had borne, for them, the indignation of the Lord. Nor was there any injustice in this substitution. It was the fruit of our Lord’s voluntary choice. He had a right, in every view, to dispose of his life and comforts as he pleased, and they

for whom he thus suffers, are his by the closest ties. Thus has our Lord shewn a generosity with which no sacrifice ever made by friendship, or patriotism, can be compared, and we know how it has been rewarded, in the joy which was set before him. And thus has God manifested a love to the world which will be admired through eternity, "for herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

But who can describe the fierceness of that wrath which was now overwhelming the soul of our Redeemer! We have seen what effects have been produced by the impressions of God's anger in those whose consciences have been awakened. It has made the most audacious to quake, and those to whom the world offered all its allurements, to choose strangling and death rather than life. But in those cases the justice of God came with demands of satisfaction for the sins of one individual, while from Christ it required reparation for the transgressions of a great multitude, which no man can number. "It was exacted of him, and he answered," not a pang was abated, and not a stroke was spared. The arm which had so long supported him was now raised to bruise him, and the voice which bore such honourable testimony to him now speaks only in the curse. Jehovah's fierce anger lies hard upon him, and at a time when he was subjected to bodily pain of the most exquisite kind, and to all the fiery darts of the powers of darkness; even then did divine justice inflict upon him wrath to the uttermost, and thus brought in everlasting righteousness. These are strong expressions, but they are not stronger than those which the Spirit of God has employed, which represent him as "made a curse, as smitten of God and

afflicted," and tell us that "God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all."

And why was this wrath endured? "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed." For our sins he had become legally answerable, and thus suffered for them, the just for the unjust. Thus a more striking demonstration was given of the evil of sin, and of Jehovah's determination to maintain the honour of his law, than will be exhibited in the conflagration of the world, the perdition of devils, or the vengeance of eternal fire. You are convinced, I trust, that it is "exceedingly sinful," and feel more resolved to hate it by the pangs of Jesus than by all the threatenings of hell.

III. I proceed now, in the third place, to state the reasons why our Lord made this complaint. It was not because he was ignorant why this was done, nor was it from impatience, fretting at his sufferings, as neither consistent with his Father's justice nor kindness. He was at no loss to reconcile them with both, and he who was led as a lamb to the slaughter, maintained that meek spirit throughout the whole period of suffering.

Nor are we to suppose, as some have done, that the soul of our Redeemer was now overwhelmed with so much sorrow and astonishment, as to overpower and cover the distinct sense of the reason of his sufferings, at least in some measure and degree. This is a supposition which degrades the sufferer, and is inconsistent with that possession of his soul in patience for which he was distinguished.

But our Lord made this complaint under the impulse of nature and of piety. There is a tendency felt by every human creature in calamity to pour out his sorrows to a superior being. It is not the result of education,

for it is to be seen in those whom no kind monitor has taught the duty and the pleasure of devotion; and it is only suppressed by those principles of atheistical philosophy, and those habits of living without God in the world, which extinguish every impression of a Deity in the heart. Now, as Jesus was a partaker of our flesh and blood, and of all the feelings attached by our Maker to our nature, he obeyed in this lamentation the great law of humanity.

But it was especially dictated by piety. While others are satisfied with declaring their griefs to their fellow-creatures, the pious soul pours out its complaint to the Lord, and finds that the act of devotion calms the troubled spirit. God calls us to raise our cry to him in sorrow, and he ever listens to it in tender compassion. Our Saviour maintained silence no longer, lest it might be thought that his mental agony had now sunk him in despondence. The enemy of souls who had tried to persuade him to presumption in the wilderness, attempted now to drive him to despair; but no efforts which he could employ were able in any moment of his suffering to shake his hope in God.

Our Lord also made this complaint to shew us the extremity of his sufferings, and to teach us to regard the wrath of his Father as the principal part of them. External objects generally strike us more than any other. We are so much under the influence of our senses, and so little do we commune with our hearts, that although we know from our own experience that there are emotions of soul more painful than torture of body, yet when we visit a sufferer, our attention is generally engrossed by his disease, and we seldom think of the fear which may be distracting his heart, or of the pangs of affection shrinking from a separation from all it holds dear in the world. In reading the narrative of our

Lord's sufferings, sympathy might have dwelt on what was done to his body by the thorns and the nails, the scourge and the spear; but he has taught us by this complaint that there were pangs in his heart, dreadful beyond all that bodily torture can inflict, or any human being can feel. They act in a way opposite to this design of our Lord, who expatiates with all the melting language of pathetic eloquence on the torture of his body, while they maintain a total silence on all that he endured from his Father. Beyond all conception must that sorrow have been which made a heart like his thus to mourn, and thus to lay open the bitterness which it alone knew.

Finally, He made this complaint for the encouragement and the direction of his people. Thus he hath taught them not to regard the horrors of desertion as any token of perdition, but as the salutary discipline of a father, by which he corrects the follies of his children, and teaches them repentance and godly fear. He hath thus instructed them to look for his sympathy when they go mourning without the sun. He marks every sigh that rises after an absent God, and every look that follows his departure, and he hath a fellow-feeling with the desolate. It is from this complaint that we learn to lament the absence of God more than any outward calamity, to dread it more than the rod of sickness or the scourge of tongues, and to maintain and to express faith and love unimpaired by the pressure of suffering and the dark suggestions of the tempter. Thus we learn to cleave to the Lord, whatever his dealings with us may be, to believe that his heart is melting while his voice speaks roughly, that the sun is behind the dark cloud, that bright gleams of comfort shall soon issue from the quarter from which the storm is now pouring down, and that he will call us

from the shadow of death to walk in the light of his countenance, and to rejoice in the kindness of his love.

In concluding this discourse, let me call on the disciples of Jesus to meditate on the blessings which have been procured for them by this desertion of their Lord. It hath saved you from the penal effects of God's wrath in this world. You shall not find the vengeance of God in any trial, nor his curse in any rebuke. It hath saved you from that sentence, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," from that darkness which the light of God's countenance shall never brighten, from that weeping and wailing which the voice of pity shall never assuage. It has obtained for you the comforts of the Divine presence in this world, in as great a measure as infinite wisdom and goodness judge meet, and secured your admission to that place where God is seen as he is. It is the presence of God which makes that land a land of light, that paradise a scene of beauty, that worship the perfect expression of duty and rapture, and that a house a home.

How strongly does this subject call on you to the admiration of your Saviour's love, and to the commemoration of it at his table! It is not by the pains of his body, the reproaches of his name, or the poverty of his life, that he has been trying to interest your hearts; but by the waters which came into his soul, and by his deadly sorrow. You feel, I trust, that gratitude swelling in your breasts, which love so generous demands, and an utter abhorrence of sin, which could only be expiated by the breaking of his heart. Let your whole life be a testimony of your deep sense of what you owe him, and see that you thus devote yourselves to him at his table. Your heart and your flesh

are crying out for the living God. Let the desertion of your Saviour be the argument which you employ, and let it be with your eyes turned to the cross that you pray, "O when wilt thou come unto me? Ye who have met with God on former solemnities, may now plead his promise, "I will see you again, and your hearts shall rejoice." And let those who are perplexed and bewildered, who are complaining that the Lord hath forsaken them, and that their God hath forgotten them, reflect that Jesus is acquainted with all their secret conflicts, and in tender pity stretches forth his hand to guide them to his Father. May God be merciful to you, and bless you, and cause his face to shine upon you.

This subject suggests much useful instruction respecting death. Judge not harshly of those who die in anxieties and fears. Some of the good have died with but a trembling hope, and others go not beyond the tranquillity of a humble dependence. Their earnest pleadings with the God of grace, and that penitential abasement and modest reliance with which they cast themselves at the feet of Jesus, saying, "I will perish here," are precious evidences of the life of God. And in looking forward to your own departure, be not unduly solicitous about the joys of a full assurance, but believe that if your last hour be dark like your Lord's, he will come and receive you to himself. Gloomy is that vale, but there is a hand which leads you through it, though you feel not its pressure, and there is an eye that watches over you though you may be unconscious of its glance.

To the unconverted, I would say, the absence of God is so far from being a terror to you, that it is your wish. You say to him, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." And were God

to abandon you, comfort and substance, friends, health, and life would leave you, for it is his visitation that preserves your spirits. But the time is coming when he must cast you off for ever. And if Jesus groaned under his Father's wrath, can your hands endure, or your heart be strong, when a fire is kindled in his anger which shall burn to the lowest hell? When God casts you off, no place in the vast universe can receive you but the pit of destruction. In hell, God is only heard in his thunder, seen in his frown, and felt in his stroke. We beseech you then to be reconciled unto God. Come away from your follies and sins, your false hopes and vain dreams, and stretch out your hands unto God, and he will receive you, and will be a Father to you, and your God for ever and ever. May the solemn theme of this day be blessed for awakening you to reflection, and for leading you to the Saviour; and may you feel as serious and anxious now about salvation and eternity, as you will do when life is closing, and the warning voice from the pulpit shall be succeeded by the angel's oath, that there shall be time no longer.

ADDRESS XII.

The Desertion of Christ Applied.

FREQUENT are the complaints of dereliction which may be heard from the world around us. One complains that his wealth has departed from him, and that poverty hath come upon him like an armed man.

Another laments the loss of health, and says, "he will cut me off with pining sickness, from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me;" while another mourns that his father and his mother have forsaken him, and that "lover and friend are put far from him, and his acquaintance into darkness." We hear those lamentations with pity, and sigh over the uncertainty of all earthly blessings. But how different are the feelings with which we ought to listen to our Lord's complaint of desertion; for the anguish which it indicates far exceeds all other sorrow in severity and horror, and it was for our sake and in our stead that it was endured.

Meditate, my Christian brethren, on the principle which prompted our Lord to submit to this anguish. It was love, and you may judge of the strength and the generosity of that love, by the joy which was relinquished, and by the pangs which were endured. The loving kindness of God is better than life, and the sense of it Jesus consented to forego for a season. The anger of God, which is worse than death, he was willing to endure, in order to restore the wretched outcast to his Father's house. Had it not been for this love, that cross would never have been endured, that complaint would never have been uttered, and that heart would never have been broken. I trust there is not one at that table unimpressed by this love, nor one that does not wish to feel it more strongly and fully. If you would have this wish gratified, keep the eye of your faith fixed on the suffering Redeemer, and on the anguish that is swelling in his heart, and implore a greater degree of divine illumination. There is nought respecting Christ, which the Holy Ghost shews with more delight to the hearts of the disciples, than his expiatory sufferings and matchless love. In his light

you will see more to astonish and melt you in this scene than ever. "I have been young," said David, "and now am old, yet have I never seen the righteous man forsaken." "Israel hath not been forsaken, nor Judah of his God, though the land be filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel;" yet here the Holy Redeemer groans, and bleeds, and dies, without an expression of sympathy from earth, or a look of love from heaven. Admire that love which all the sorrows of his heart could not enfeeble, and which you now behold shining in glory amidst all the darkness of his desertion, and mingling its animating power with all the sad emotions of his soul.

After the Service.

I exhort you who are now happy in the presence of God, to walk humbly with him. If you are tempted to be proud because of the abundance of your revelations, think on the darkness which was spread over the Saviour's soul, and this will repress all the emotions of self-complacency, and fill you with that adoring wonder and gratitude which, while it abases you in your own eyes, will exalt you in his. To those who are now lamenting that the Comforter who could have relieved their soul, is far away, I would say, it becomes not you to use this language, Why hast thou forsaken me, for "your iniquities have separated betwixt you and your God, and have provoked him to withdraw himself, and to withhold good things from you." Abandon the follies which have brought on you this misery, and pray for his return in earnest desire and in humble hope. Let the weeping eye be raised to him, and the hands

which hang down be lifted to him, and he will surely visit you.

Let the gracious presence of God be carefully improved. Fear not affliction, for by the candle of the Lord you shall walk safely through the darkness. Let this encourage you in duty, that the joy of the Lord shall be your strength; and let it dispose you to commiserate the deserted, and to labour to revive their hope in God. Let it render you superior to the vain delights of a present world. Compared with the joys of God's presence, or the horrors of his absence, what are its smiles? or what are its frowns? Thus you may recommend religion to others, and tell them how happy it makes you. When you return from the mount, where you have been with God, let your faces shine with the lustre of gentleness and charity.

Adhere steadily and affectionately to your God, and never forget the solemn pledges which you have this day made to your Redeemer, of obedience to all his laws. Think it not enough that you abstain from gross acts of injustice or sensuality, for religion is dishonoured by slothful habits in its professors, by their embarrassments arising from their living beyond their income, by foolish talking, a censorious temper, and a niggardly spirit. Remember that purity is the best ornament of youth, and patience the best prop of age; that equity is the credit of the master, and fidelity that of the servant; that contentment is the wealth of the poor, and humility the glory of the prosperous; and that this is the bliss of a family when its character is "The Lord is there."

And now in parting with you, I would address to you that animating promise of God, with which you may welcome any solitude, any duty, and any tribulation. "My presence shall go with you, and I will

give you rest." Strength and life, peace and joy, grace and glory, are in his presence. This, O Christian, shall be the name, which to the praise of his grace you shall wear for ever, "Sought out and not forsaken." Your support in affliction, your deliverance from trouble, your recovery from backsliding, and your safety in death, shall evince its truth, and it shall shine on your vesture for ever in that world where the Lord shall be your everlasting light, and your God your glory. Amen.

ADDRESS XIII.

MATTH. XXVII. 52, 53.

"And the graves were opened, and many bodies of saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many."

DEATH terminates the power of man. Affection or vanity may deck the sepulchre with the ensigns of glory or dominion, art may check the progress of corruption on the body, and genius give the brightest lustre to the name, but to deliver from the grave is a work too mighty for the power of creatures to accomplish. When kings die, the chambers of the dead are opened, the coffins where sleep the mighty of former ages are exposed to the view of the curious, and a place is prepared beside them to which the recent victim of death is conveyed with solemn pomp, but the dead are not stirred up for them to meet them at their coming. In barbarous ages the funerals of

princes and warriors have been solemnized with rites of blood; numbers of captives have been sacrificed at their tombs, and the ceremonies of mourning which should have softened the heart, have been closed with deeds of horrid cruelty.

But how different is the influence of the death of Christ! When he gave up the ghost multitudes were quickened who were mouldering in their graves. To this wondrous event your attention is now turned. Ye are strangers, we trust, to the incredulity which says, How could these things be? and to the indifference which says, What are they to us? Providence intended them to honour the death of his Son, and to confirm our hopes that this mortal shall put on immortality?

Those who were raised were probably persons who had known our Lord, and whose relatives and acquaintance, living in Jerusalem, felt assured when they saw them that there was no deception in this scene. They were holy persons, and, on account of their eminence in piety, were made the subjects of this astonishing miracle. God sometimes employs in the present state, wicked men as the messengers of his will, but there is no instance in Scripture which warrants us to suppose that he will call them from the abodes of darkness to declare his wonders.

They were many in number. This made the miracle more striking, and increased the evidence of it. Raised by the same power, sent on the same errand, and to the same place, how tender would be their interest in each other, and how solemn their united testimony! Had a few been sent from the tomb to bear witness to the power of Jesus, the rulers might have tried various plans to discredit or suppress their testimony, but the voice of many speaking with the majes-

ty of immortals, must have filled them with consternation.

How pleasing is the view given of their state while in the grave,—“ They slept.” Released from their labours and sorrows, and insensible to the bustle and distraction of this vain world, they had entered into rest. By their removal before the crucifixion of our Lord, they had been spared those pangs which his surviving friends felt when they saw him passing through the scene of suffering.

From this sleep of death they arose. In great earthquakes the bodies of the living are swallowed up, but this earthquake at the death of Jesus opened the gate of their tombs, and said to these prisoners, “ Go forth.” Sometimes the bodies of the dead have been torn from their graves by barbarous men, whose cruelty could not be satiated by the abuse of the living, but it is unconscious dust that is moved from its place. But though the bodies of these saints were putrid and decayed, they were endowed with life, soundness and vigour.

These saints abode among the monuments till our Lord rose, when they went into the city, and bore their testimony to his glory, and to the powers of the world to come, and this they did to many. It is not likely that they remained long on earth, or that they returned to their graves; but from their fellowship with Christ in his resurrection, we may suppose that when he was received up into glory they ascended with him to heaven. Some may imagine that they would have been peculiarly fitted for declaring the salvation of Christ among the Gentiles, but it was more for the glory of God, and for the encouragement of man, that this should be done by persons encompassed with infirmities, and liable to mortality.

But let your meditations turn to the glorious things which were intimated by the surprising event. It was a convincing token of Christ's complete victory over death. This was an enemy to whom all had been constrained to bow. The ingenuity of man could devise no way of escape, nor could his power oppose to him any effectual resistance. It was one great end of our Lord's appearance to destroy this enemy, and what friend of man will not bless him for the generous attempt? To accomplish this design, he assumed our nature, and lived and died, that by his obedience and death he might expiate the guilt which made us liable to everlasting misery, and procure for us eternal felicity in soul and body. Behold as evidences that this object has been gained, these saints, rising from their graves, their souls perfect in holiness united to bodies incorruptible, and proclaiming with tongues framed for the high praises of God, "That the plague of death and the destruction of the grave was come." It was by them that song was first raised which hath so often expressed the gratitude and the joy of Christians, and how interesting does it seem while sung by persons ransomed from the grave, around the cross and tomb of him who died and rose a conqueror, "O death, where is thy sting, O grave, where is thy victory!" The keys of hell and of death were now put into the Mediator's hands, and his first employment of them was the release of these saints. Light arose on the land of darkness, and the tree of life hath ever since flourished in its borders. When Samson died, thousands of the Philistines perished with him, and those whom he slew at his death were more than those whom he had slain in his life; but when Jesus died, many were made alive. His stripes are our health, his conflicts our victory, and his death our life. That Savi-

our who thus signalized his death, will, I trust, distinguish the commemoration of it this day by the manifestation of his gracious energy in every heart at his table. We look not for it in the graves around us, but in our hearts, and their hope of it shall not be disappointed, who are now saying with pious desire, "O let my soul live and it shall praise thee."

After the Service.

The resurrection of these saints was a powerful means of conviction afforded to the Jews. When we think on their disregard of the ministry and the miracles of our Lord, we are ready to suppose that God would have finally abandoned them. But instead of doing this, at the very time when his blood had been shed by their wicked hands, God sent these messengers from the tombs that they might look on him whom they had pierced, and mourn. "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just," did they say, "and desired a murderer to be granted unto you, and killed the Prince of Life whom God hath raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses." It was the generosity which dictated his prayer for his murderers, which sent them these monitors, and ordered Apostles to follow them, saying, "Unto you God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you by turning every one of you away from your iniquities."

Behold, Christians, grace much more abounding where sin abounded, and call to your remembrance the manner in which God waited to be gracious to you. Many were the means of conviction which you slighted; and when he might justly have given you over to a reprobate mind, he still strove with you, till at length your

soul was won. O let a deep regret for the time you have lost, animate you to double your diligence in the service of God, and encourage you to persevere in your efforts to reclaim the most stubborn from sin and folly. But the resurrection of these saints was also a pledge of that spiritual vivification which was to be effected by the Gospel. At this period the nations of the world were sunk in spiritual death. So vain had former efforts been to restore them, that it was with almost no hope that the question was asked, "Can these dry bones live?" When Jesus was suspended on the cross, and cast his eyes over the nations, and beheld them dead in trespasses and sins, he lifted up his voice and cried, "Come from the four winds, O breath of the Lord, and blow on these slain that they may live." That cry, "Father the hour is come," was thus answered, "The hour cometh, and now is, wherein the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." By the ministry of the Apostles multitudes passed from death to life, the hideous workings of moral depravity were succeeded by the beauties of holiness, the excess of riot by strict temperance and cheerful self-denial, and the horrible forebodings of condemnation and misery, by the lively hope of mercy and felicity. I trust you have experienced his quickening power. These saints were made alive at the same time, and by the same means, and the life they had was the same in degree; but ye were quickened at different periods, and by various methods, and in some the spiritual life is more vigorous than in others. These saints had their life from Christ on the cross, you have it from Christ on the throne. Let those in whom the spiritual life is vigorous have their devotion elevated, their faith steadfast, and their love fervent; and let not those who are feeble and languid

say, "Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost," but let them say, "Wilt thou not revive us again that our hearts may rejoice in thee?" If his quickening power remained with him in the last and lowest depth of his humiliation, you cannot suppose that his hand is now shortened that it cannot save.

But, let me add, that the event you have been contemplating was a pledge of the blessed resurrection of the just. The few instances of a resurrection which had already occurred, could not be expected to preclude all anxiety and doubt on a point so momentous. The heart might be ready to suggest that a resurrection may be the privilege of a chosen few; but multitudes, and I among the rest, may be doomed never to return from the dust. But behold this large company of saints arising, and rejoice in hope that he shall quicken your mortal bodies. When our Saviour was expiring on the cross, he cast his eyes over the sepulchres of Jerusalem where the saints slept on whom his power was now to operate, and said, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise; awake and sing ye that dwell in the dust, for your dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast forth her dead." I call on you to rejoice in the hope of an event which so many examples render credible. You have seen the tree which was cut down sprouting again, and marked the influence of the spring over the grass and humble flowers of the turf which is spread over the grave, and even these things teach you that the bones of the dead shall flourish as an herb, and that their darkness shall be as the noon-day.

How soothing is the view which you may take of your departed friends—they are saints asleep in Jesus. Ye have carried them to their graves, but God shall bring them from them, and they shall meet you

with countenances bright with the lustre of immortality, yet bearing the wonted expression of love.

Be not ashamed of the testimony of our Lord. Let the lips which he has opened shew forth his praise, and the heart which he hath quickened suggest a good matter concerning him. Think of the courage with which these saints went into the city, where our Lord's enemies, whose hands were still reeking with his blood, bore the sway, and be not afraid to confess your Lord. While the tongues of the living were reviling his Son, God brought from the house of silence witnesses to his glory. Let your prayers be pure, fervent, and charitable, like the prayers of the saints, your faith active, and your patience stedfast like theirs.

Approve yourselves the children of the resurrection. When your friends have served their generation, and are fallen asleep, rejoice in the hopes of what Christ will do for them. While you mourn that one so amiable and useful now dwells in the dust, and mark the stillness of the peaceful grave, there is a voice which mingles with your lamentations, and says, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, and I go to awake him out of his sleep." Approve yourselves the children of the resurrection, by the calmness with which you contemplate the traces of mortality in your nature. When the pale countenance, the freezing blood, and the trembling limbs, indicate that the winter of your life is come, rejoice in hope of that spring which shall make all things new. As becometh the children of the resurrection, die in the faith. These beds are beds of dust, but the flesh rests there in hope. The Holy City is before you, let your prayers and praises enter it and let them tell what you wish to be and shall be there. The thought now impresses you, How much will I have to say to the praise of my Saviour on high

My comforts I will ascribe to his bounty, my honours I will lay at his feet, and on his head the blessings of my soul shall be for ever coming. The chief of sinners saved by grace shall with most wonder and joy sing, "Salvation to our God that sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." Now may the Lord establish your hearts unblameable in holiness till the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints. Amen.

ADDRESS XIV.

JOHN XIV. 27.

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

IN these words, the affectionate solicitude of our Saviour for the happiness of his disciples is most beautifully expressed. His dying gift, and his parting counsel, have been the consolation of Christians in every age, and often have they rendered the communion service a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. And when you are now assembled to commemorate his death, may he come and stand in the midst of you, and say, "Peace be unto you." May he breathe on you, and say, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost."

Meditate, Christians, on the nature and extent of that peace with which the Lord Jesus blessed his followers. He left his disciples in peace with God. He was now about to make peace by the blood of his cross, and by

the power of his grace he had brought his disciples into a state of reconciliation with God, taught them to look up with confidence to him as a Father, and left them entrusted to his care, and assured of his pity. And you have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and in his friendship you have a defence and a felicity which bids defiance to all the malice of earth and hell. Instead of trembling at his flaming sword, his vindictive frown, and his destructive curse, you touch his golden sceptre, feel the sense of his favour, and rejoice in his promises of mercy.

Jesus gave to his disciples peace of conscience. He was now about to offer up that sacrifice which should furnish them with a reply to all its charges, and open to them a refuge in all its alarms, and had directed them to that purity of heart, and that rectitude of conduct, which should secure to them its joyful testimony. And in every age his blood purifies the conscience from dead works, and his grace forms to that excellence the fruit of which is quietness and assurance for ever. He inspires such a hope of mercy and acceptance at the bar of the Judge of all, as fortifies the mind against all the surmises and censures of wickedness and malignity.

He left them also in harmony with each other. With them he had maintained the peace of charity and kind affection in spite of all their provocations, and had taught them the meekness that is slow to wrath, the gentleness which conciliates prejudice, and the love which endureth all things. And by the wisdom which comes from above, which is pure and peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, and full of mercy, he gives one heart to his followers in all ages, and makes the society of his genuine disciples, existing amidst the conten-

tions and strifes of the world, to exhibit to the view a quiet retreat in a howling wilderness.

But Jesus left to his disciples also that comfort of the Spirit which had cheered his mind under every afflicting incident, and under every dark anticipation; and the joy of the Holy Ghost is his gift to you. There are some whose tempers are so selfish and malignant, that their pleasures are marred if others have a part in them; and then only are they satisfied when they partake of their enjoyments amid the terrors and the misery of their dependants; but the liberal heart of the Lord Jesus deviseth liberal things. He has no glory too high, and no joy too blissful for his people to share. It is his wish that his joy may remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

Meditate on the value of the blessing of peace, whose importance is attested by the eternal counsels of Jehovah respecting it, by the agonies of the Man of sorrows which obtained it for you, by the wishes of the best on earth, and by the intercession of the Redeemer in heaven. And how delightful is it to consider it as the peace of the Saviour, and with the utmost propriety does he call it his, since it is the purchase of his blood, the fruit of his Spirit, the result of his lessons, the answer of his prayers, and the joy of his heart.

It is an interesting circumstance in this passage, that the language of our Lord conveys the idea of a testamentary grant, and this suggests that our Saviour's feelings in the view of death were all directed to the interest and the happiness of his people. It is by their latter will that men express their affection to those who survive them, and it is by the value of their gift in proportion to their circumstances, that a judgment is formed of the strength of their regard. And in this last gift of our Lord, you see that he loved his own to

the end, and that he lived and died with you on his heart

This circumstance suggests also that this peace is peculiar. It is to those connected with him by blood or friendship that a testator bequeaths his possessions, and those who receive this peace are such as are animated by Christ's spirit. It is not merely to the eminent in grace or utility that it is left, but to those who are feeble, helpless, and depressed like the bruised reed. The meek shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace, and as this peace is ample in itself, it is not limited to a few as its possessors, for "He creates the fruit of the lips peace, peace to him that is afar off, and to him that is nigh," and "as many as walk according to his law, peace shall be on them and mercy, and on all the Israel of God." I may also mention that this language intimates that this peace is unmerited. Testamentary gifts are generally mere expressions of regard, and are seldom the return of favours or services received from the legatees; and you feel that you had no claim to this peace. Instead of the sweet sunshine, and the soft dew, you deserved the horrible tempest of snares, fire and brimstone. Do you delight to consider this peace as the result of grace, and is this a reflection which increases your present enjoyment in it, and which will heighten even your bliss above, that it is bestowed on one who deserved nought but "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish?" This is a spirit well adapted to the place you now occupy, and none else becomes you.

And as a testament is of no force while the testator liveth, for he hath power to revoke, or to modify it as he pleases, but after his death it is unalterable; our Lord by his death ratified the everlasting covenant, and the sacramental cup is the pledge of this bequest,

sealed in his blood. In this light you are now called upon to regard it, and to rejoice in it as the security of your happiness, the life of your peace, and the bulwark of your safety.

After the Service.

Meditate, Christians, on the excellencies of this peace. The peace of the world rests on no basis but the expectations of a presumptuous hope, the false conclusions of ignorance and error, the suggestions of flattery, and the deceits of Satan ; but this peace is founded on the merits of Christ's atonement, and on the sufficiency of his grace. The peace which the world gives lies in the gratification of the lower principles of our nature, which never impart the delight yielded by those of a nobler description ; but the peace of religion results from the exercise of the mind that was in Christ, and hath in it much of the pleasure which flows at the right hand of God. The peace of the world is often a mere shew. Those who have been admired for their gaiety, and whose bursts of mirth have made the inconsiderate imagine that they were perfectly happy, have acknowledged that even in these moments they could have exchanged situations with the poorest of human beings who was reconciled to God ; but the peace of the good man rules in his heart, and in the severest distress shews itself in the meekness and serenity of the whole deportment. The peace of the world lulls men into a forgetfulness of God, and a disregard of their duties, and so enfeebles the mind, that in the hour of calamity it is distracted with fear ; but this peace animates to every holy exercise, and so fortifies the heart, that it can sustain the evils of persecution and the terrors of death.

And the peace of the world is transient. The very passions which give them enjoyment make them miserable ! When their head presses their pillow they feel its thorns ; but the peace of the Gospel is sure, for all the virtue of the cross, and all the kindness of his heart, are pledged for its permanence, who died for your salvation, and who lives for your happiness.

It will be gratifying and useful to you to reflect how your Saviour's peace differs from that of the world as to the mode of its bestowal. The peace of the world is given merely in expression or wish. Happiness it is not in their power to bestow. It is only the God who formed the heart who can make it happy. But Christ is the God of peace, and when he speaks it is done. The peace of the world is often spoken insincerely. The glowing language, and the kind looks of friendship are too often the instruments of deceit, but Christ is full of grace and truth, and he is the faithful witness. The world speaks peace from selfish views, and in expectation of a return superior, or at least equal to what it promises, but the happiness of his people is the Saviour's aim. The world speaks peace to those to whom God says there is none, and assures its votaries of safety in courses against which the threatenings of God denounce his vengeance ; but Jesus speaks peace only to the humble, the penitent, and the holy.

Be grateful to the Saviour for this peace, and be solicitous that all your friends and connections may possess it, and if when you die you leave them in possession of it, they are happy though it may be their lot to be poor, and without this, all the distinctions of wealth and grandeur will be but splendid wretchedness. Beware of disturbing the harmony of civil or religious society by the workings of pride, anger, or envy. " Follow after the things which make for peace, and things

whereby one may edify another." And "let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." Let no anticipation of evil trouble you. Let them dread the approach of the tempest, or sink under its fury, who have no hiding place from the wind, and no covert from the storm, but it would be most unreasonable in those to do so to whom God hath said, that "He will hide them in his pavilion in the day of evil, and set their feet upon a rock." Your fears are vain as the terrors with which superstition haunts the minds of children, and the calamities which you dread, are like the spectres which visit their fancy, the creatures of imagination, and incapable of doing you any real injury. Uneasiness and fear will dishonour your Lord, by exhibiting his kind assurance as delusive, or as insufficient to yield you tranquillity, and it may discourage those who are favourably disposed to what is pious. These anxieties and forebodings will impede your progress in holiness, and keep you in wretched and degrading bondage. "Be careful then for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." When you are afflicted and tossed with tempests, and not comforted, instead of fruitless repining and paralyzing fear, implore his help, and he will arise and rebuke the winds, and say to the sea, "peace, be still, and there will be a great calm." The winds and the sea in the world of nature are subject to his controul, and so are also the passions of the heart, and the tumults of the people. Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always, and by all means. Amen.

ADDRESS XV.

ISAIAH XXIV. 16.

“ From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs, even glory to the righteous.”

THESE words beautifully express the homage you are now to pay to your Redeemer, and the claims which he hath to it. The communion table is a place where every feeling should be sacred to the honour of your Lord and Saviour, and where your hearts should utter in love and zeal those feelings and purposes which are to be discovered in the service and the virtues of your future conduct.

The person to whom your homage is required, is the Righteous One. This expression points out the purity and rectitude of our Lord's nature and character. In his spirit there was no guile, and in his conduct he was not merely harmless, but beneficent, in a manner and to a degree never seen on earth before. Repelling all the power of a corrupting world, he laboured to sanctify men, and while himself the victim of injustice, he procured for them the blessings of salvation. In human characters justice often appears with a sternness which gives it the semblance of haughtiness and cruelty; but in Jesus it is accompanied with a pitying heart, and with a bountiful hand. You feel, I trust, this view of his character, allaying the fears excited by the consciousness of your own unworthiness, and he wishes you to shew that you believe it by meeting him at his table with a lively hope.

This expression points out also the merits of his obedience. By obeying the precepts, and enduring the penalty of the law in our stead, he hath formed a righteousness which defends those to whom it is imputed from every charge, and entitles them to every blessing. "The Lord our Righteousness," is the title by which he is made known to us, and regarding him in this light, our hearts are filled with hope and peace. Were we merely to consider him as righteous, the consciousness of guilt would make our hearts to quake; we would see nought in this character but purity to abhor, and justice to punish us; but in regarding him as "Jesus Christ the righteous," we behold in him a surety to answer every claim, and an advocate faithful and prevalent.

But the Lord Jesus receives this character on account of the rectitude of his administration. In all the acts of his government, his sceptre is a sceptre of righteousness. There are events which seem to us to darken his administration. Impiety rages, which one stroke of his rod could crush, and virtue is depressed and calumniated, which by the word of his power he could make to flourish exceedingly; but let us remember, that goodness must be tried to display its energy, and to enhance its rewards, and that when the workers of iniquity are most confident and outrageous, he will more signally manifest his glory in checking their violence, and exposing their presumption. At the consummation of all things, when Jesus shall unfold his plans to minds purified from every selfish bias, this shall be the opinion which shall be expressed with regard to them, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, O thou King of saints."

History tells us of some, whose integrity, firm amidst

every trial, secured them the appellation of "the just." With this epithet their names have come down to posterity; but while we abhor the thought of erasing one letter from the epitaph of the illustrious dead, we must assert that no claims to this character can be likened to his, whose righteousness is the salvation of millions, and shines through heaven, earth, and hell.

Is this a view of Christ's character on which you love to meditate, and is it in this that you wish to resemble him? "Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.

But what is the homage which is required from you, and which the good delight to pay? It is to ascribe glory to him, the glory of supreme and unbounded perfection as the true God, and the glory of his successful undertakings as Mediator—of the conquests he has made, the graces he has displayed, and the blessings he has bestowed. If the discoveries of men of science are celebrated in the most eloquent language which admiring genius can employ; if the warrior lives in the statue, the pillar, and the record that commemorates his victories—shall the memory of our Lord perish, or the song of his worth wax feeble? "Let the people praise thee, O God, let all the people praise thee." Heaven regards his excellence as its fairest ornament, the wailings of hell declare how the mighty fell before him, and his abode on earth was the greatest honour ever conferred on it, and brought back to it more than the charms of innocence. Let this, O Christians, be now the language of your hearts. "I will magnify that power by which the legions of darkness were vanquished, that love which saved me by the sacrifice of himself, and that zeal and courage which opened the

way of peace to man through all the horrors of the curse.”

But this language intimates your wish that his glory may be displayed. You desire that he may display his glory as the light of the world, by exposing to contempt its errors and superstitions, and leading men to grace and truth; as a High Priest, by subverting every vain hope of salvation, and making his cross the object of undivided trust and universal exultation; as a King, by crushing his rivals, and putting his laws into every heart; as the Lord the Healer, by binding up the broken-hearted; and as the Prince of Peace, by hushing into perpetual silence the noise of war and discord. It is, I trust, the great wish of your hearts at this moment, that he may display his glory in this assembly by clothing his priests with salvation, supplying the wants of the poor in spirit, filling with righteousness those who are hungering and thirsting after it, encouraging the trembling penitent with the hope of mercy, and giving to the mourner everlasting consolation. It is your wish that the loftiness of man may be bowed down, and the Lord alone exalted this day, and that his beauty may attract the admiration of every eye, and his grace the confidence of every heart. “Let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and amen.”

After the Service.

IT was the earnest wish of the Old Testament saints that glory might be conferred on the Messiah; that, after the termination of his course, the Father might welcome him to heaven, and assign him the highest place and the brightest crown there, and that angels

and archangels might sing forth the honour of his name. It belongs to us to rejoice that all this is done, but we see not yet all things put under him. And you wish him to have the glory of reigning without a rival in every clime, and in every heart, and that every hour may bring fresh accessions to his standard, and new honours to his name. Such wishes are delightful to your Saviour, for he considers them as an evidence of the lofty and generous character of your piety, and he will fulfil them to his own glory, and to the happiness of his church.

To encourage your hope that this shall be the case, consider what hath been done in that period of the gospel dispensation under which we live. From the wilds of America, from the Hottentots, who have been considered as the lowest of our race in capacity, from the oppressed slave who has found in Jesus a friend and a comforter, and from regions in the East where the propagation of the Gospel was deemed impracticable, this song has been heard, and the most cheering testimonies to the power of religion have been brought; and we know "that, even from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, the name of Christ shall be great among the Gentiles, and that in every place incense shall be offered to it, and a pure offering."

How different is this song of praise from the cry of the idolaters in the days of Elijah, "O Baal, hear us?" from that of the infuriated multitude at Ephesus in the days of Paul, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians?" and from the shouts which rend the air amid the impure and bloody ceremonies of heathen nations in the present day? This tribute is a reasonable service, and strengthens the love of excellence in those that pay, and in those who hear it. Too long have we heard from distant regions the afflicting accounts of the igno-

rance, degradation, and wretchedness of human beings ; but now we learn from time to time the benignant influence of the Gospel on their virtue and happiness, and are stimulated by their gratitude to magnify the Saviour, and to walk in his ways, I call on you to be ashamed of the cold and feeble manner in which you have too often sung the Redeemer's praise, and I trust the resolution is now kindling in your souls, " I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart, and I will glorify thy name for evermore." This fervour may be called enthusiasm, but it is such enthusiasm as swells the notes of the blessed. How delightful is it to mark the harmony with which Christians unite in celebrating the Saviour's excellence ! Their dependence rests on the same righteousness, and their love terminates on the same worth. No selfish cry seeks its own superiority, no party attachment shouts for the honour of its leader ; but piety, soaring over every lower object, fixes on Jesus, and in his glory and joy finds its own. The multitude with one voice demanded that our Lord should be crucified, and dreadful was that cry which burst from so many lips, " Away with him, away with him ; crucify him, crucify him." But the Christian world, with one heart, and one song, proclaims the Saviour's worth—calls on all around to honour him, and devotes to him every talent. " Halleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns."

Never become languid in the Saviour's praise. Men are soon disgusted with their most favourite objects of admiration, and the heart, eager for novelty, seeks some other character to celebrate ; but this theme is inexhaustible, the love of Jesus can satisfy all the wishes of the soul ; and the farther you advance in wisdom and holiness, the stronger will be your impressions of his excellence, and the greater your delight

in his praise. Were good men at liberty to vary their subject of praise, they would say, "None but this."

Remember that your lives must proclaim the glory of the righteous, as well as your voices. Let your strict integrity, your regard to truth, justice, and equity, in all your transactions, honour the Master you serve, and the doctrines you believe. The homage of a virtuous life is the noblest tribute you can offer to him. Without this good conduct, the songs of Zion, and the forms of worship, will only be the evidences of your hypocrisy. "Whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."

Let the prospect of the Saviour's increasing renown comfort you when your hearts are pained by the blasphemies of his enemies. From foreign nations impious books have been imported into our country, and productions of a similar cast have been sent from Britain to them; but while we abhor the dreadful guilt of such writers, and sigh over the madness of those whom they deceive, we know that before Christ's rising glory his enemies shall either bow to him or perish. When you die, others shall take up this song, and rejoice, Christians, that though the grave cannot praise your Lord, heaven shall; though death cannot celebrate him, immortals can; though they that go down to the dust cannot hope for his truth, they that rise to paradise "wait for the adoption, viz. the redemption of their bodies," and anticipate Messiah's universal triumph. Have you heard your children cry, "Hosannah to the Son of David," in a manner which made you think that their hearts were influenced by his love? they will sing "glory to the Righteous" when you are gone; and in thus honouring the Redeemer, they will shed lustre over your memory, and these songs from the uttermost ends of the earth shall be heard in hea-

ven, and shall add another note to its anthems, and new glories to Messiah's reign. "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth."

ADDRESS XVI.

EZEK. xxxiv. 29.

"I will raise up for them a plant of renown."

THE figurative representations of the Saviour's character and work are frequent subjects of meditation to Christians, and convey the truths of the gospel with much sweetness and power to the heart. You are now to consider him as the Plant of Renown, and while I set before you some of the excellencies for which he is so justly celebrated, may the Spirit so enlighten and impress you, that all those pious feelings may be excited, and all that holy pleasure experienced, which will render the communion service acceptable to your Saviour, and delightful to you.

This Plant is renowned for its beauty. The beauty with which the God of nature hath adorned many of the productions of the earth is wonderful. It is not merely on a slight inspection that they charm; but the more minute the examination is, and the more enlightened and correct the taste, the admiration which they excite is always heightened. "Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin, and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." But the love-

liest production of nature is only a faint emblem of him who is possessed of all divine excellence, and all moral worth, and in whom the greatness which excites admiration is united with the tenderness which wins our love. Jesus is the the image of the invisible God, fairer than the children of men, more bright in excellence than angels, and for ever unrivalled in all that charms the heart. And while the beauty of the fairest plant quickly passes away, and while in the midst of its glory it droops and dies, this Plant cannot lose aught of its freshness, or any of its tints.

To see the beauty of the Lord in his sanctuary was the supreme desire of David, and for this he was willing to turn away his eyes from all the world's attractions; and such I trust is your great wish. You feel that the forms of worship, the society of your brethren, and the labours of ministers, however suitable and fervent, could not compensate for his absence. The sight of Jesus in his excellence will produce a humbling sense of your own vileness; but so far from damping the ardour of your desire, this will strengthen it; for you are as solicitous to advance in repentance and humility, as in any of the other graces of the Spirit.

This Plant is renowned for its fruitfulness. Beauty and fruitfulness are not always associated in plants; nay, those which are most beautiful are generally least distinguished for utility; but this plant is as deservedly celebrated for the value and abundance of its produce, as for its beauty. It is impossible to enumerate all its fruits; for every blessing by which the soul can be enlightened, sanctified, or comforted, is derived from it. The knowledge which is life eternal, the peace that calms the conscience, the purity which renovates the heart, the comfort which gives thanks in affliction, and the hope that triumphs in death, are from the Lord

Jesus; yea, from him proceeds all the felicity and perfection of the paradise above.

Every plant has its own peculiar fruit. We expect not grapes from the apple, nor figs from the vine; but this Plant bears twelve manner of fruits, and yields all that is necessary for the purity and happiness of the soul. It is long ere some plants bear fruit; the expectation excited by their goodly blossoms is often disappointed; and when they have yielded their increase, it is not till a subsequent season that we can expect aught from them again; but the Tree of Life yields its fruit every month, and at all seasons it imparts its blessings. Never does a true penitent go away from it empty, and thousands may put forth their hands at the same moment, and share of its produce. You are now in a scene where Jesus hath often dispensed his blessings, and if you have come to it with a strong sense of your spiritual necessities, and with an earnest desire that he who can alone supply them may bestow on you what you so much require, he will load you with his benefits, and cause you to retire from it, saying, "Out of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."

This plant is renowned for its virtues. There are some plants which are in high request for their medicinal qualities; and it should call forth our gratitude to the Creator that he hath provided so amply remedies for the evils by which the body is afflicted, and teaches men to know and apply them. But no plant can be likened in virtue to the "Balm of Gilead," and it affords a remedy for all the plagues of the heart. Raging corruption is quelled by its influence, and the anguish of a guilty conscience is healed. It is like the tree which Moses was commanded to cast into the waters of Marah, which rendered them wholesome and sweet. It makes the severest afflictions light, and

death, which the worldly man dreads as his curse, to be welcomed with gratitude.

Superstition hath attributed many wonderful virtues to the fancied relics of the cross; but the efficacy of this plant in curing the moral diseases of the human heart is incontrovertible; and one touch of it by the hand of faith will bring from it a remedy for the worst maladies of the soul. Implore the Saviour to impart to you at his table that divine influence which will heal those plagues of the heart, which are so offensive to him, and so painful to you, and that he may strengthen those gracious principles which seem ready to die.

This Plant is renowned for its fragrance. So condescending is the providence of God, and so rich is his goodness, that he ministers delight to all our senses, and hath given to various plants a delightful odour. We read of the smell of Lebanon, and in the East, such is the profusion of odoriferous plants in some places, that the air is scented by them for a great space around. But the fragrance of the most favoured spot is not to be compared to that of the Plant of Renown. Every virtue of Christ's character, and every promise of his word; every precept of his law, and every rite of his worship; every act of his mediation, and every blessing of his grace—is to the good like ointment poured forth. “His lips are like lilies dropping sweet smelling myrrh; all his garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, and his death was a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour unto God.” It hath made the loathsome dungeon pleasant, and overcome the noisomeness of the grave.

When Jacob appeared before his father in the goodly raiment of his brother Esau, Isaac blessed him, and said, “The smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed.” You now appear before

God, clad in the righteousness, and animated by the Spirit of his Son, and for his sake God will accept you with your sweet savour, and receive all your gifts. When the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.

After the Service.

This Plant is renowned for its shadow. Shade was of much consequence in the East, where a scorching sun exhausted the strength and spirits; and one of the most soothing images by which consolation in sorrow was exhibited, was that of the shadow of an expanded tree, or of a great rock in a weary land. And such is the shadow of this Plant of Renown, that the fainting are revived by it, and the drooping soul is cheered. To you Jesus is now addressing his kind assurances of peace and safety, the expression of which gratifies his benevolence, and the fulfilment of which shall shew the power of his might and the tenderness of his compassion; and I trust the consolation you are now experiencing in his presence, is leading you to adopt the language of the church, "As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I am sitting under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit is sweet to my taste." The poor find here the rest of contentment, and sickness and sorrow that of patience and acquiescence. Here the persecuted find a place of refuge from the evils of the world, and the tempted a retreat from their spiritual enemies. Here age finds repose after the fatigues of life, and the dying obtain a peace which the terrors of the last hour cannot shake. It is here where the flesh rests in hope, and where dying saints enter into the joy of their Lord. "I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever, and I will trust in the covert of thy branches."

You have now probably some anxious thoughts as to your future lot, and it would be foolish to expect that all your remaining days will be easy and prosperous; but no storm shall find you without a shelter, and in no calamity can you be utterly desolate. Jesus can supply all your wants, he can support you in every trouble, and make you as happy in the day of adversity as ever you were in your most prosperous seasons.

This plant is renowned also for its permanence. Plants most noted for beauty are seldom durable. That delicacy of form and colour which makes them so charming, renders them less able to resist the buffetings of the rude blast, and by successive production the vigour of the fruitful tree is exhausted. Trees which, in former ages, were the glory of forests, and the shelter of the brave, are now to be traced only in the rotten stump, or are buried under heaps of moss or clay. But the Plant of Renown can suffer no injury from the violence of enemies, and there is in it no principle of decay. To Jesus belongs the power of an endless life. The rough blast of persecution hath beat upon it, and the axe hath been lifted to cut it down, yet it remains unhurt. Christianity hath seen mighty empires sink in ruin, and generation after generation going down to the dust, yet its life and its virtues are unimpaired. "I saw, in the visions of mine head, a tree in the midst of the earth, the height thereof reached to heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of the earth, the leaves thereof were fair, and its fruit much, and in it was meat for all; the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of heaven dwelt in its boughs; and behold a watcher, and a holy one came down from heaven, and cried, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches; shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit; let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls

from its branches." Such is the mandate which hath often been issued against earthly potentate; but the Plant of Renown hath Omnipotence for its defence, and eternity for its duration.

Contemplate the verdure and beauty of this Plant with increasing wonder and delight, and trace with intense interest its eventful history from the fields of Bethlehem, where it first arose to human view, to Calvary, where it was cut down—from the garden of Joseph, where it sprung up on the third day—to Mount Olivet, where it was conveyed to heaven, where it is the ornament and felicity of the paradise of God. Look not with desire on the forbidden fruit of sin. Never forget the dreadful moment in which, when "Eve saw that the tree was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave to her husband, and he did eat." If any gratification is forbidden by your Maker, if it is likely to prove dangerous to your innocence, or if it may be hurtful to others, you must abstain from it, and let your self-denial be determined and cheerful. Apply this plant habitually to all the maladies of your souls, and think not when the pain is mitigated, or the wound cleansed, that the cure is completed. You must improve its influence till perfect love hath cast out every fear, till you are wholly freed from the oppressing and defiling influence of the body of death, and till you stand complete in all the will of God.

Beware of seeking comfort under any other shadow. Wicked men flee for consolation to sinful indulgences or worldly pursuits, and their sorrow is forgotten, and the heart is hardened; but continue ye in Christ's word, and his promised sympathy will sooth your hearts to rest. And indulge no fear as to its permanence, for

the power that raised up this Plant can and will protect it. The superstitions which men have tried to graft on it shall be torn away ; but this is far from being an injury to it, or an omen of its destruction. You are rooted in him, and it becomes you to bring forth abundantly the fruits of righteousness. How animating is his language, " Herein is my Father glorified in that ye bring forth much fruit, so shall ye also be my disciples." The glory of God is the end of your redemption as well as of your creation, to conform you to Christ's active and suffering virtues is the object of all religious institutions, and " if you have been planted in the likeness of his death, you shall be planted also in the likeness of his resurrection."

ADDRESS XVII.

ZECH. XIII. 6.

" And one shall say unto him, what are these wounds in thine hands ? Then he shall answer, those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends."

THIS question is expressive of surprise, and of affectionate concern. That one so inoffensive and so beneficent as the Son of Man, one so detached from the tumults and strifes of the world, so meek in his spirit, and so gentle in his manners, should be thus treated, may well excite our astonishment. We behold around us many instances of the unworthy treatment of the good, but it might be supposed that excellence such as

that of our Lord would have conciliated, or at least awed the most profligate and audacious.

When we consider that it is not a stranger who is thus abused, but our best friend and benefactor, we feel solicitous to be acquainted with the cause of such treatment, and are ready to say, "As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die."

The answer which our Lord gives to the question, leads you to meditations fitted to wring your hearts with penitential anguish, and to fill your faces with shame. Beware, in the sad review which you are now to take, of directing your indignation chiefly at the misconduct of others, and of flattering yourselves with the vain conceit that of you the Son of Man hath little reason to complain ; but looking on him whom you have pierced, mourn bitterly, as one lamenteth for an only son.

Christ was wounded in the house of his friends, when he was so basely treated by his own disciples. One of them betrayed him into the hands of his enemies. That a member of his family, a constant associate, and one who had received from him so many marks of kindness, should act so treacherous a part, deeply affected the heart of our Lord. "It was not an enemy that reproached me, or I could have borne it, but it was thou mine acquaintance ; we took sweet counsel and went to the house of God." He was aware of the use which the pharisees and scribes would make of this circumstance, to support their virulent calumnies against him, and to excite such prejudices against his apostles, as might impede their success, and endanger their lives in promoting his cause.

But the rest of the disciples acted a part which, though by no means so wicked as that of Judas, was faulty in itself, and painful to the heart of their Mas-

ter. When he was apprehended, they all forsook him and fled. Though Jesus wished not to subject them to suffering or death, and though he did not desire their aid to rescue him from the violence of his enemies, it would have been consolatory to him to have seen them discover in the face of those that persecuted him, their strong attachment to him, and exhibit an example of fortitude in his cause, to animate the resolution, and maintain the firmness of his future disciples. It must have strengthened the insolent contempt which his enemies felt for the friends of his cause, when they saw them thus abandoning it in the first hour of its jeopardy; and it must have grieved our Lord to witness such cowardice, and such a want of confidence in that protecting care which they had so often experienced.

Peter also denied him. He who had drawn his sword and cut off the ear of Malchus, by his threefold denial of Christ thrice pierced his heart. Under the impulse of sudden fear he disregards his Master's solemn warnings, and his own repeated pledges, and declared with curses, "I know not the man." To be disowned by our friends in the day of our calamity is felt by the good as a great aggravation of affliction, and the look which Christ gave to Peter intimated, that while he forgave him, he considered his conduct as perfidious and cruel.

Christians you ought now to call to your remembrance the instances, in which, from the dread of the ridicule and abuse of the profane, you have withheld from the cause and the friends of religion your countenance and support; you are ashamed to meet your Lord after such treachery, and on account of it he might justly disown you, but he permits you to express your regret for your unworthy conduct, and to

implore his grace to render you more zealous and steadfast in future.

But our Lord was wounded in the house of his friends when he was crucified in Jerusalem, the house of his professed friends. The nation of Israel is often styled in Scripture the chosen people of God ; to the Jews were committed his oracles and ordinances, and he had bestowed on them many peculiar blessings. To them the Messiah was promised as the glory of his people Israel, and ardently was his appearance expected, and yet, when " he came to his own, his own received him not." As he did not assume the character of a temporal prince and conqueror, and did not deliver them from the Roman yoke, they despised and rejected him ; and notwithstanding the purity of his doctrine, the splendour of his miracles, and the beneficence of his life, they crucified and slew him with wicked hands. The peculiar people of God denied the Holy One and the Just, and killed the Prince of Life. The Roman Governor who condemned him, was the tool of their malice, and the Roman soldiers who crucified him, were but the instruments of their cruelty. " They were instant with loud voices that he should be crucified."

This is the scene which you are now contemplating ; and how admirable is that wisdom and grace of God which hath so ordered it, that by those sufferings, by which the Jews gratified their envy and their malice, the salvation of men was obtained ? While the Jews point to our Lord's wounds as tokens of their vengeance and their triumph, we will look to them and say, " He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed." He now calls you, in melting remembrance and lively faith, to trace

the variety and the severity of his sufferings ; and, while you contemplate this most affecting spectacle, consider the share which your offences had in producing them, and by what pangs the pardon and acceptance in which you now rejoice, were procured. Let your hearts be filled with love and sorrow while you behold his body broken for you, and his blood shed for remission of sins to many, and for remission of sins to you.

After the Service.

IN a different sense from these already stated, Christ has been wounded in the house of his friends ; and the mention of it may strengthen your godly sorrow, and produce a salutary caution. He is wounded in the house of his friends by the immoral conduct of his disciples. When a professor of religion indulges in intemperance, is fraudulent in his dealings, commits lewdness, neglects the interests of his family, or fills them with terror by his violence and tyranny, the cause of the gospel receives a deep stab. The profane exclaim, “ this is the end of their solemn looks, their long prayers, and their sacramental vows ; these saints are all knaves in heart, and their form of godliness is only a cloak for their deceit and rapacity ; you will meet with more upright and honourable conduct in a heathen who knows not Christianity, or in an infidel who abhors it, than in its most zealous friends.” Such horrid speeches, and the actions which give occasion to them, make rivers of water to flow from the eyes of the fearers of God, and Jesus cannot behold them unmoved. He complains of his followers who act an immoral part in the language employed by those whose patience has been severely tried, and whose hearts

have been broken by the ingratitude, folly, and wickedness of those from whom they expected very different conduct. He knows the fatal influence which the slanders of the scorner, supported by such immorality, have in preventing many from attaching themselves to religion, who had become favourably disposed to it, and that they excite in the hearts of the young, prejudices against Christianity which the most powerful arguments and the most exemplary virtue cannot vanquish. The profligate conduct of some who bear the Christian name, has injured it much in the estimation of heathen nations. The brutality, the avarice, and the fraud of some who have visited their shores, have made them execrate the gospel as a system of deceit and cruelty, and dread its entrance among them as they would the raging of the pestilence. If you talk to them of the blessings which Christianity brings in its train, they will point to their burning villages, and their desolated fields, and say, "Such are the fruits of our connexion with Christians."

Your consciences are now charging you with the offences by which you have grieved the spirit of Jesus, and given occasion to the adversaries of the Lord to blaspheme; and how bitter are such recollections in a scene where they are contrasted with his unwearied kindness! Banish them not from your hearts, but let them remain as constant monitors against sin, and as powerful excitements to you to adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things.

But Christ also is wounded in the house of his friends by their strifes and schisms. It is mournful to think for what frivolous reasons Christians have separated from each other, what malignant passions they cherish, and what abusive language they apply to those whom they ought to love as brethren. The

more frivolous the grounds of dispute and division are, the more violent is the manner in which the schismatic contends for his own views, for it is thus that he hopes to magnify his cause to his own conscience, and in the public estimation. To such disgraceful scenes the infidel points, as unanswerable arguments against the spirit of Christianity; he talks of the mildness and forbearance, and candour of philosophy, but says that the temper formed by the gospel is censorious and malignant, and that it is owing entirely to the restraints of law that rival sects do not attempt the extermination of each other by persecution and murder.

Dissensions among Christians are grieving to our Lord. A father could not behold his children abusing and striking each other with indifference, and Jesus views with deep concern the evil tempers of men thus striving to defeat that influence of his meekness and love, by which he labours to unite them in the bond of peace, and exhibiting his religion, fraught as it is with mild wisdom, and glowing with fervid charity, as the source of envy, slander, and contention. Were Christians to think on this as they ought, we should not see so many new sects and rival parties formed. The schismatic, who causes divisions to gratify his own vanity, and to avenge himself for the slights which have been put on him, and who dignifies his bigotry and rancour with the holiest names, is regarded by the Saviour as a foe to his glory, and to his peace, as aiding infidelity in her assaults on the gospel, whetting her sword and poisoning her arrow. Let me exhort you to follow peace with all men, and by speaking the truth in love, and acting with uniform integrity and gentleness, you will extinguish the prejudices of those who differ from you, and contribute to diffuse that forbearance and catholic love whose influ-

ence will one day unite the Christian world, and thus fulfil the earnest prayers of its Lord.

Before I dismiss you, I may state what you will feel as consolatory to your hearts, that Jesus is wounded in the house of his friends by his sympathy with them in their sorrows and persecutions. When Saul was on his way to Damascus, with the most cruel designs against the followers of our Lord, he addressed him in these memorable words, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." The good man who has been shut up in a dungeon for the cause of truth, and whom no voice or look of compassion ever reaches, has felt his Lord with him in his dark abode, and that he remembered his bonds as bound with him. The martyr in his agonies may hear from the spectators only taunts and curses, but the heart of Jesus glows with admiration of his fortitude, and melts with compassion for his sufferings.

But in all our afflictions he is afflicted. In the good, who labour under the anxieties and privations of poverty, or whose hearts bleed from unmerited calumny, or the disappointment of some generous purpose, or who, from the loss of friends, pine in gloomy solitude, he feels a tender interest, and will by the riches of his grace, the joys of his presence, and the tokens of his approbation, comfort such mourners. Let this mercy of the Lord Jesus influence you to bear your sorrows with becoming fortitude, and to exemplify to each other that sympathy and kindness by which your sufferings will be alleviated, and your hearts knit to one another, and by which the Spirit of Christ will be glorified, and his law fulfilled.

ADDRESS XVIII.

JOHN VI. 39.

“ Lord, evermore give us this bread.”

WHATEVER was the object of the Jews in this request, and whatever was the spirit in which it was presented, it is a most suitable prayer for a devout communicant. It aptly expresses the pious wishes of his heart, and Jesus delights to answer it at his table. This is the place where he will satisfy the poor of Zion with bread. The prayers of the proud, the hypocritical, and the carnal, he will reject with abhorrence ; but to the imploring voice of the humble and the penitent, he will bend his ear in mercy. In his house “ there is bread enough and to spare,” and in his heart compassions flow.

The bread of which our Lord speaks may represent his doctrines. We read of Wisdom’s bread ; and Hezekiah says of divine truths, “ O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my soul.” The doctrines of Christ sanctify, invigorate, and delight the faculties of the soul, and it is for want of knowledge that a people are destroyed. And by this bread the blessings of Christ’s salvation are exhibited, the acceptance in which the soul is safe, that grace by which the saint acts, and that comfort in which the heart is at rest.

This is bread which comes from the land of Immanuel, and which is provided for man by Jehovah himself ; it is the true bread, of whose excellent

qualities the manna, and all the other supports of existence are but shadows, and the bread of life, which blesses natural, supports spiritual, and nourishes to eternal life. It is bread whose nutritive qualities can never fail, which is as much within the reach of the poor as of the rich, which sweetens the meanest fare of the cottager, and whose place cannot be supplied by any of the luxuries of the palace; it is ever delicious to the palate, and on it the soul shall live for ever.

It is only in some countries that the bread fruit tree will flourish, or that the "corn of wheat" will grow, but this bread is destined for salvation to the ends of the earth. What is deemed delicious in one country as an article of food, is often loathed in another; but Christ is the common support and stay of his saints throughout the world: "They all eat of the same spiritual meat, and they all partake of the same spiritual drink." There are seasons when bread is of no avail for the support of natural life, when the stomach can neither receive nor digest it; but this bread is suited to the necessities of the soul at all periods. In the agonies of death faith improves and applies his grace as much as in the duties of life. Other bread can only satisfy hunger. It will not avail a man that he is supplied with bread in abundance, if no water is allowed for his thirst; but in Christ Jesus every want of the soul may find a supply, every charge an answer, every pious wish its fulfilment, and every sorrow consolation.

It is by a laborious process that the fruits of the earth are turned into bread for our nourishment, and ere we could partake of salvation, Christ must become incarnate, and suffer, and die. He did sweat great drops of blood in his tremendous agony, that we might obtain strong consolation; and he was suspended on

the accursed tree, as the worst of criminals, that we might receive "the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of our salvation." This is bread which has from age to age been the sustenance of good men, and which is still exhibited in as great abundance as ever. It comes from an inexhaustible store, and "his mercy is from generation to generation upon them that fear him." The manna fell only while the Israelites were in the wilderness, and in no after extremity did they obtain again such a supply from heaven; but of the bread which the first Christians did eat with gladness and singleness of heart, we are invited to partake; and, till the end of all things, Jesus will spread his table, and say to the children of his love, "Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

The language of your profession is, "Lord, ever more give us this bread:" but do you feel that it is absolutely necessary to your spiritual support and happiness? Bread is the staff of life; yet, necessary as it is, a substitute may be found for it sufficient for the support of existence; but without the doctrines of Christ there is no wisdom, and without his blessings there is no happiness. What are the speculations of vain deceit to a starving soul? "It is as when a hungry man dreameth, and behold he eateth; and he awaketh, and his soul hath appetite." And how poor is the enjoyment which the world can give. Solomon assembled around him all that the world calls delightful; he withheld not his heart from any joy; yet all was found to be vanity and vexation of spirit. Many are in the sight of God truly wise to whom philosophy never taught one of her lessons, and many of the poor of this world hath the grace of God made truly happy. Christ was their wisdom and their joy. Are these

your impressions, and do you now feel that without Jesus Christ there would be nothing around you but darkness, and nothing in you but despair!

Do you feel an eager desire for this bread? Hunger is a very strong appetite, and is often employed to point out vehemence of desire after any object, and most urgent is the cry of the starving man for relief. Now, the consciousness of our misery as sinners, and a persuasion of the happiness of those who "are partakers of Christ," will produce the most eager wishes, and the most importunate cries for his mercy. Are these the requests of your hearts at this moment? "O send forth thy light and thy truth—visit me with thy salvation—satisfy us early with thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad in thee all our days." Such desires shall be granted, and I trust that this shall be the case in this ordinance, for the Saviour hath said "that he satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness." Have your desires been partial and transient, or have they been habitual? Have you sought the grace of Christ, not merely when your consciences were tortured with guilt, or when sickness brought death and judgment to view, but have you felt it as impossible to live in comfort without it as to die in safety? Is your submission to him, as your teacher, such that no tenet of his offends, and no mandate disgusts you?

The hypocrite may utter his prayers with affected fervour, but this differs as much from the earnestness of genuine piety as the glare of the meteor from the steady effulgence of the sun, or the gilded dross from the solid gold. Should it be suggested to any of you, for the trial of your faith, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to the dogs, let this be your answer, " Truth, Lord, I am a dog, yet the dogs

eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table." Then will he feed you with the finest of the wheat, and satisfy you with honey from the rock.

After the Service.

Christ, your Saviour, is the appointed dispenser of this bread. It was to Joseph that Pharaoh committed the distribution of the corn that was in his garners, and when the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread, and he said to all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph, and what he saith unto you, do." "And it hath pleased the Father that in Christ should all fulness dwell, that from his fulness we might receive grace for grace." It is said that Joseph opened the storehouses, and sold to the Egyptians; but this bread is the gift of Jesus. He has full authority to dispense it in what measure, and at what season he pleases; and such is his benevolence and compassion, that he will drive no suppliant sternly away. "What parent is there who, if a son ask bread, will give him a stone?" and if this is most unlikely with men, it is impossible with him who is full of compassion. The communion table is a place where Jesus receives our homage, and distributes his blessings with a sweetness and a liberality which accords with his dying love. You came to it to solicit further measures of wisdom and grace from him, and to encourage you to present to him such requests, I repeat to you his own words, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." He will neither upbraid you with your unworthiness, nor with the largeness and frequency of your petitions.

You have felt your souls gratified, I trust, in eating

this bread. There are many things which are tempting to the eye and to the palate, but which are unwholesome and poisonous, but the blessings of religion fulfil every hope and every promise, and those of them which wear in our apprehension a forbidding aspect, are found to yield the sweetest enjoyment.

The bread of life is the glory of this feast. It is the communion of the body of Christ. It revives the strength of the exhausted, and comforts the hearts of the dying. Many things relished in youth become insipid in age; but this bread is the support of man in his decline, and it is in it alone that he can then find pleasure. Were all the wisdom, or the wealth of the world presented to you in place of the grace and the salvation of your Lord, you would despise them as husks, and say of this bread, "It is meat indeed."

Be grateful for the share you have obtained of it. Let the thanks of the poor for the meat that perisheth make you ashamed of your scanty gratitude for the bread of life. The Lord is now saying to you as he did to Elijah, "Arise, and eat; and he looked, and behold there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head, and he did eat and drink, and laid him down again. And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise, and eat, because the journey is too great for thee; and he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights, to Horeb the mount of God." You have a toilsome pilgrimage before you, and it is with this bread that you must renew your strength.

You do not imagine that your partaking of this bread of life is to be confined to this ordinance, for your wish is, "Lord, evermore give us this bread." There are varieties of food adapted for the different periods of

human life. Milk is provided for babes, and strong meat for grown-up men; but this bread is the only nourishment of the soul. The wisdom of Christ is the best guide of youth, and his grace is the best support of age. How sad would be the case of a man who, though plentifully fed this day, should be doomed afterwards to famish with hunger! His daily bread must be given him, or life will be destroyed: so there must be a daily supply of the Spirit of Christ, renewed illumination, and increasing strength.

There is no condition which the believer can anticipate in which this bread shall be unnecessary, none in which his own wisdom can direct his way, or his own strength sustain his burden. Yea, this is the bread which you desire to eat in the kingdom of God, and this is the heaven for which you long, even that state in which "the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed you, and lead you to living fountains of water." Jesus is the life of all the service, and of all the happiness of the blessed. They are ever fervent in praise, ever active in contemplation, ever lively in enjoyment, and ever melting in tenderness, and this is owing to the continued influence of the Lord Jesus; without which praise would sink, contemplation would flag, enjoyment would languish, and charity would fail. The saints in heaven will feel their dependence on Christ through eternity, and glory to express it to his honour.

Let the Redeemer's kind attention to your wants incline you to deal your bread to the hungry. This charity is mentioned by Isaiah as one of the characters of a fast which the Lord hath chosen, and it certainly becomes us to consider the case of the poor while we observe this feast of love. The grace commemorated in

it should give a new impulse to our beneficence every time we observe it. And it is not merely alms to the poor which you are required to impart, as God hath prospered you, but instruction to the ignorant, counsel to the perplexed, warning to the simple, and comfort to the mourner. "Cast thy bread on the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days." Though it is not given with any sordid view, it shall be restored in the requital of the grateful, in the mental enjoyment which results from every act of humanity, and in his gracious rewards, who will not forget your labour of love.

SERMON III.

The Saviour's Birth announced.

LUKE ii. 10, 11.

“ And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people: for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.”

IT was a common device in ancient times to represent the birth of eminent persons as distinguished by various prodigies. In the poetry of such periods, and even in the fragments of their histories which have been transmitted to us, there is in the account of the early days of men of renown a strange mixture of truth with fable. This practice was prompted by the hope that the authority of the legislator would be established, the wisdom of the sage consecrated, and the glory of the conqueror heightened in the estimation of the world by the presages of future distinction which were spread around their cradle. In the ages of ignorance and superstition, there was no fable too gross for imposture to circulate, or for credulity to swallow. The systems of idolatry were fraught with such absurdities, that no interference of their deities could be censured as degrading, or denied as impossible.

How different is the case with the sacred narrative of the birth of Christ. The incidents which it details are completely consistent with the most enlightened ideas of the perfections of the Almighty, and the relation of them is stamped with the most evident charac-

ters of truth. They took place in a manner too public for the introduction of an imposture, and in an age too enlightened to admit of the circulation of any fabricated tale of wonders.

We are told, in the preceding part of this chapter, that, when Mary brought forth her first-born son, "she wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." Thus cold, inhospitable, and contemptuous was his reception, whose birth was so great a blessing to the world. But while earth was silent, and men were careless, the air was illuminated by the glory of the Lord, "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." An angel is sent to announce the joyful event to shepherds watching their flocks, and the text is the message which he brought. It is without controversy the most important intelligence that ever was conveyed to the ear of man, and tidings at which the world kindles into rapture, appear despicable when compared with it. It is deeply interesting to the whole human race, and will continue to bless when victories are forgotten, and their memorials are dust. This message is brought to us by mortals like ourselves, but though the mode of communication is more humble, it is more interesting, as delivered by creatures requiring to the same extent as we do the grace and power of the Saviour, and often we trust animated by the experience of his mercy. The belief of this message will diffuse through this assembly the most delightful feelings, and, embracing the infant Saviour with the arms of our faith, and glorying in the cross of a dying Redeemer, our souls will be sanctified and blessed in the exercises of Christian devotion, and, like the shepherds, we will return glorifying and praising God for all the things which we have heard and seen.

The text calls our attention to the messenger, to the message, to its character, and to the persons to whom it was addressed, and for whom it is intended.

I. The messenger was the angel of the Lord. It was an honour to the highest angel to bear this message, and to do homage to the infant Saviour. To minister to the Son of Man, and to the heirs of salvation, is the series of services by which angels are appointed to testify to the glory of God, and to their own honour, how different their spirit is from that pride, jealousy, and envy, by which their companions fell into condemnation. Thus also Providence hath taught us, that, however meanly a carnal mind may think of such an employment, it is the highest honour for persons in the most elevated stations, and of the brightest powers, to communicate to their fellow-creatures the knowledge of salvation, and that in such a duty the ministers of the gospel should "be instant in season and out of season."

It is delightful to mark the compassion of this messenger. The vain and the haughty enjoy the embarrassment and terror which their greatness excites in their inferiors, but this angel soothes the fear of the shepherds by the kindest language, and wished to inspire them with the idea, that, though he was a messenger from heaven, he was their guardian and their friend.

His benevolence also claims our notice. Had he been sent to the dungeons where fallen angels are reserved to judgment, to say to them that for them a Saviour was provided, his promptitude would not have been so surprising; but it is for man alone that mercy is destined, and yet he delights to proclaim the incarnation of him who "took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham."

This messenger appears very solicitous that his message should be attended to, and he deemed it worthy of the highest admiration. Into the mysteries of grace, which were now opening, he looked with eager interest, and he could not bear that human beings, for whom this salvation was provided, should remain careless. Here is a subject worthy of the study of the noblest faculties; and, while the pride of science, and the spirit of the world, turn away from it with disdain, let us rejoice that, in contemplating it with adoring wonder, our feelings are akin to those of angels and of archangels, and our exercise is the employment of heaven.

II. Let us now consider the message itself.

1. It announces a most important event. A Saviour is born. The name Saviour is, of all titles, the most eminent in benevolence and true glory. It has been sometimes applied by venal flatterers to those whom they wished to idolize; but this prostitution of it should only strengthen our admiration of those who are entitled to it by their generous deeds. It has been applied by the grateful to their deliverers from temporal calamity or destruction. The man who has been rescued by another from a watery grave calls him, in the transports of his gratitude, "his saviour," and nations apply this title to the man by whom their foes have been scattered, and their chains broken; but there is one only who has a full claim to this appellation, and to him it shall be ascribed through eternity.

Jesus is a Saviour from the guilt of sin, which he put away by the sacrifice on the cross—from its power, which he subdues by the energy of his grace—from its pollution, which he washes away in his own blood—and from its punishment, which he endured in our stead. He saves us from the tyranny of Satan, whose

empire he subverted, and whose works he destroyed—delivers us from the world, whose evils he converts into means of improvement; and he hath deprived death of its power to do us any real injury, or to detain us for ever in its dark abode. He saves us from the vengeance of eternal fire. But in this title it is intimated that he bestows upon us the blessings which are opposed to these evils. He raises us to the possession of a divine righteousness, a holy nature, and a glorious liberty—gives us the Spirit of peace—places us under the gracious care of the Most High—and calls us to an inheritance in heaven.

Now, this Saviour did not come to our earth in the full maturity of our nature, or enter at once on his great work, but made his first appearance in it as an infant. To human view little was to be expected from a babe born in circumstances so obscure and neglected. The sanguine imaginations of parents have anticipated, in the opening talents of their children, that they will be the ornament of their family, and the benefactors of their country, and have felt all the mortification which disappointment and ridicule could produce; but in this babe, lying in the manger, angels beheld, with prophetic eye, the conqueror of hell, the peace-maker betwixt heaven and earth, the healer of the nations, the improver of the moral world, the propitiation for sin, and the destroyer of death. Even now they hail him as the Captain of salvation, and apply to him a name which he values above every name.

2. But let us consider the names by which the Saviour is described. He is called Christ the Lord. The first of these intimates his appointment to this office. When a man, from the impulse of humanity, interposes in behalf of a fellow-creature sinking under calamity, the generous promptitude with which he rushes forward to

do it heightens our praise of the compassionate deed ; but when a malefactor is about to suffer the punishment of his crime, the interposition of another in his behalf must be sanctioned by the magistrate or judge, and requires, in order to its efficacy, the offer of an adequate satisfaction in his room. Man was the victim of divine justice, and that victim it would not relinquish unless another was provided and substituted in his stead. Now Jesus came cheerfully forward to occupy our place. " I will give thee for salvation to the ends of the earth," was the Father's appointment ; " I will go in thy name to save," was the Son's consent ; and " blessed is he that cometh in the power of the Lord as a Saviour," is the welcome with which he should be received.

But this name points out his qualifications for this office. The Spirit was given him without measure. He was endowed with all the wisdom which was requisite for shewing the path of life, the benevolence which was necessary for his labours of love, that faith, patience, and courage by which he might endure the cross and despise the shame, and that power by which he wrought the astonishing miracles by which his mission was confirmed, the wretched were blessed, and his foes subdued. We observe with regret an important office in the hands of one not qualified for it, and while we may give him credit for good intentions, we condemn his rashness and presumption in undertaking what he hath neither wisdom nor vigour to execute ; but in contemplating the character of Christ, we behold our eternal interests committed to Him who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.

But he is also the Lord. The task of salvation is arduous, and by far too great for created power to accomplish ; but let us not imagine that Jesus will fail in

the attempt, or that he will relinquish it as impracticable. Omnipotence shall aid his efforts, and infinite wisdom shall form his plans, and direct his steps. When he is the agent, doubt of his success is impious, and despair of salvation is madness. Let the foes who oppose him be ever so numerous and potent, the Saviour is the Almighty ; and let the number to be saved be ever so vast, he is able to redeem them all. That babe, whose face is wet with a mother's tears of grief and pity, is the Lord's anointed. Feeble and helpless as he is, he is one with Him, with whom is everlasting strength ; and though in circumstances apparently forlorn, is honoured by angels as God over all blessed for ever. The divinity of Christ is here exhibited as connected with the riches of his grace, and with the blessings of salvation ; and this stamps a peculiar baseness on the conduct of those who " deny the Lord that bought us," and labour to degrade that generous friend who brought the power of the Highest to our relief, and came from the majesty of the throne to the shame of the cross.

The expression points out also that dominion with which Jesus is invested for the successful application of the blessings of salvation, and that subjection which his redeemed will gladly yield to him. This shall be the high reward of his generous love, and in this way the adoring gratitude of his people shall express their obligations by worshipping him as Lord of all.

3. The message states the time of his birth. The particular day on which our Lord was born was doubtless exactly known to the apostles ; yet they have not given us, either in the gospels, or in their epistles, such information as to the precise period, as that we can fix it with certainty. Providence hath in much wisdom left us in this uncertainty, that this day might not be de-

graded in its return by the ceremonies of superstition. The primitive Christians were not accustomed to reckon time as we do, from the birth of Christ, but by the dates used in the Roman empire. It was not till the sixth century that the event recorded in the text was employed for this purpose, and then the pride of Rome was humbled before the babe of Bethlehem, in the commencement of a practice which has for many centuries marked the course of ages, and which will continue to do so till there shall be time no longer. It is with the fact itself that we are chiefly concerned, and not with the precise day on which it happened. It is a striking circumstance, that on the very day on which Christ was born, his birth was announced, and that an angel was sent to proclaim that the word was made flesh. Thus the shepherds had it in their power to ascertain the truth of this statement, to encourage the hearts of Joseph and Mary amidst the neglect and unkindness which they were experiencing, and to glorify God for performing the mercy promised to the fathers, and remembering his holy covenant.

It is a common cavil among the opponents of the gospel, "If Jesus came for such benevolent purposes, why did not he appear at an earlier period?" But to this it may be replied, that the benefits of his salvation were enjoyed for ages before it was actually accomplished, and that the period of our Lord's incarnation was one in which the state of the world seemed most loudly to call for the Saviour's appearance, and in which his fulfilment of his task was likely to be most honourable to his power and grace. This was the day for which the pious had long waited, and for which providence had for ages been preparing the way, and blessed be God we can sing, "Unto us a child is born, and to us a Son is given."

4. In this message the place is mentioned where this event happened. This was the city of David, a place chosen of God, and foretold in ancient prophecy. It was not an honour destined for any of the palaces of Jerusalem, but for a place which was then sunk in obscurity; yet so unconscious were the inhabitants of Bethlehem of the glory now shed over it, that none of their hamlets was opened to receive him. David's Son and David's Lord honours his city by making it the scene of his first appearance, and this was admirably suited to the humiliation of his after-life. It was not from the bed of down that he rose, or from the palace that he issued forth to his course of labour and of suffering, but his toils at Nazareth accorded with the manger at Bethlehem, and his death on Calvary was a suitable close to both.

Famous cities have contended for the honour of being the birth place of eminent men. Seven cities claimed this as their noblest distinction, that Homer, the greatest of poets, had been born within their walls. This has been considered as an honour which no profusion of wealth, and no display of magnificence can equal. But while the particular place where some eminent men were born cannot be determined, God has been pleased to mark out the spot which was the birth-place of Jesus, not that superstition may adorn it with its pillars and its images, but that enlightened piety may observe the faithfulness of God manifested, and the condescension of the Messiah displayed.

III. Let us, in the 3d place, attend to the character of this message. It is styled good tidings of great joy.

After the observations which have been made on the excellence and work of the Saviour, whose birth it announces, it will not be necessary to enlarge on this part of the subject; but a few remarks may be proper

to show with what justice this message may be thus designated.

Consider its certainty. Where intelligence is highly important or pleasing, we feel the greater anxiety respecting its truth ; and if there are any circumstances which tend to discredit it, we are unhappy till these are fully examined and set aside. But "this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." In its truth we may rest with perfect complacency ; for it is attested by the character of the God from whom it proceeds, the history of him whose grace it details, and the experience of those to whom it has been the power of God to salvation. You know that its truth has been assailed, and with as much fury as if it had been a delusion hostile to the virtue and the happiness of mankind, but those efforts of its foes have only tended to stimulate the zeal of its friends, and led to the more full exhibition of its divine authority in their arguments, and of its benignant influence in their lives.

Consider its suitableness. Much of the interest of any communication depends on its being adapted to the circumstances of those to whom it is addressed, and a blessing appears doubly valuable to those who feel themselves miserable without it. And who that has paid the least attention to the moral condition and prospects of man can question the suitableness of this message to his lost estate ? It is not a proclamation of rest to the happy, but to the wretched ; it announces not righteousness to the innocent, but to the guilty ; and it does not offer deliverance to those who are safe, but to those who are perishing.

Let us also consider that the blessings which it announces are lasting in their duration. This is a cir-

cumstance which stamps, I had almost said, insignificance, on the most joyous communications of a worldly kind, that the advantages which they disclose either perish in the using, or may be torn from us by violence, or must be finally relinquished in death; but the blessings of redemption are abiding in their nature, they are maintained in our possession by their gracious giver, and it is in death that he perfects his salvation in the soul. Eternity shall be filled with the enjoyment of its blessings, and occupied in the celebration of its glory.

Consider also its influence, and how it improves and blesses the soul where it is received. Who can tell how many hearts it has formed to goodness, and how many seasons it has filled with the voice of rejoicing! The faith of it has dissolved the enchantments of worldly pleasure, and scattered the gloom of sad adversity, called into operation every energy which can improve the character, and made the last hour the hour not merely of peace but of triumph. It is of its influence that ancient prophecy speaks in language so beautiful and so pleasing. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose, the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped, the lame man shall leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing."

Philosophy hath sometimes boasted that she has discovered a remedy for the miseries of man, and that her precepts point out to him the means by which his nature will be refined and ennobled; but there are few who have had it in their power to try their efficacy, and of those who have done so, all have felt, and some have been candid enough to confess their insufficiency; but the gospel is the grand res-

torative. It shall raise the man who believes it to the participation of a divine nature. No evil can resist its energy, and no obstacle can successfully oppose its transforming power.

IV. It only remains that we consider to whom this message was addressed, and for whom it was intended. Human sagacity would have imagined that, in order to secure respect and circulation to this message, it must be made known to men of power and influence, to the scribes of Jerusalem, or the sages of the heathen world; but, to show by whom this dispensation of grace would be received and valued, and how little it requires the aid of worldly wealth, rank, or wisdom to its support and propagation, it is addressed to shepherds, and by them it is heard with transport. And often hath the faith of the gospel blessed the occupations of pastoral life, and while it has been excluded from the palaces of the great, and the academies of the learned, it has been gladly welcomed into the peasant's cottage.

But though first made known to them, the angel intimated that this message was intended for all people. The voice of heavenly wisdom had not hitherto been heard beyond the precincts of Judea, but now the Apostles were to go forth and to announce in cities and villages throughout the bounds of the Roman empire, and among various savage tribes, the birth of the Saviour, and this was the charge given to them and to their successors, "Go, preach the gospel to every creature." We may lament that this mandate has been so little attended to since the first ages of the church, and that while commercial enterprise and adventurous speculation have navigated the most perilous seas, and explored the most frightful deserts, Christians have shown so little solicitude to make

known to the perishing heathen the way of salvation. A more zealous spirit is now awakened, and its object is to make the Saviour known in his glory, his blessings, and his laws. Its efforts are increasing from year to year, and spreading from land to land ; and by the wisdom of its plans, and the activity of its operations, it is evident that it is guided and strengthened from on high, and it will proceed in its glorious career till the Saviour is known and received, and loved and served in every region of the earth.

It may be said also that these glad tidings are for all people ; because from the birth of the Saviour the nations were to derive the most important advantages. For the sake of those who are to be enlightened, sanctified, and saved, destructive judgments are suspended or mitigated, and the means of improvement are bestowed in the greatest profusion. At the birth of Jesus a religion was introduced which has contributed in a very great degree to the reformation of the nations. Who that contrasts the present state of Europe with its condition before the appearance of the gospel, can forbear exclaiming, " What hath God wrought ! " How wonderful is the change as to knowledge and to morals ! The fooleries of superstition have given place to a reasonable service, and the sophistry of the schools to true wisdom ; errors and prejudices have been exploded ; the horrid abominations of heathenism have been swept away ; the ferocity of war has been mitigated ; domestic life is characterised by gentleness and kindness, instead of absolute power and stern severity ; and every institution which can alleviate or remove human wretchedness is formed. The gospel has done more to ameliorate even the temporal condition of men than all political or scientific institutions.

I may add, that some in all nations shall be for ever blessed in this Saviour. He came not to select his followers from the tribes of Jacob, but from the Gentile nations; and from that moment to this, persons have been going from various quarters of the world into the kingdom of God. The Apostle John, who beheld in vision the consummation of the New dispensation, thus describes its issue: "I beheld and lo a great multitude which no man could number, from all nations, and people, and kindred, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, and cried with a loud voice, salvation to our God, that sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." What a delightful prospect; and how animating is it to the heart of every man who adores his Saviour, and who loves his species! Christianity breathes nothing of the malignity of national prejudice, or of the exclusive spirit of a rancorous bigotry. Its spirit is that of unlimited benevolence, and its employment is to do good to all. O that those who are disgusted with it as disfigured by the trappings of superstition, and breathing the fury of intolerance, would turn their eyes to it as it appears over the plains of Bethlehem, pure and benign as the angel who proclaimed it, and announcing peace on earth, and good will to men.

Before I conclude this discourse, let me call on persons in the different periods and conditions of life, to perform the duties which they are taught by this scene. Let the young learn humility and meekness from the Babe of Bethlehem, and let them not judge of the importance of objects by the pomp of this world, which often spreads a profusion of verdure round what is useless or poisonous; but by their religious and moral utility. Let those in superior stations learn to condescend to them of low degree, and in imitation of

this angel, to be solicitous for the spiritual welfare and the true happiness of their inferiors. Let those who occupy the humbler walks of life imitate the patient industry of those shepherds, and rejoice that God delights to bless the scene of honest labour with the messages of his grace. And let the aged who are soon to leave this world, rejoice in the Saviour's entrance into it, which blesses the departure of the good with peace.

Let the disciples of Jesus cherish a high esteem for the gospel, and let them show this by their regular attendance on the preaching of it, and by their cheerful support of its institutions, by enlightened zeal for its purity, and by a conversation which will recommend it. Be solicitous for its universal diffusion; and for this purpose it is not enough that you devote your prayers and your gifts; you must exhibit an attracting picture of the beauty and the power of religion in your conduct. Beware of every thing which may excite a prejudice against Christ's cause. One deed of severity, and one instance of rash censure or gross intemperance, will make your zeal odious. Be sober, candid, and merciful.

Embrace with joy the opportunity now presented of testifying the interest which you feel in these good tidings, and the gratitude which you cherish to this Saviour. Look to the infant Saviour in the manger, and offer him your gold, frankincense, and myrrh, your grateful praise, your glowing affection, and your penitential sorrow. Look to the suffering Saviour on the cross, and rejoice in the sweet smelling savour of his great sacrifice. And look to him exalted on the throne a Prince and a Saviour, and bow your knee in the name of Jesus, and confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

But there are some who disregard the message of salvation; and we wish them to remember that they reject the counsel of God against their own souls. The time is coming when Christ shall appear in another form, and for another purpose, when "he shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them who obey not the gospel." The universal wail of the ungodly shall announce their utter despair, and the voice of the archangel shall summon them to that bar from which they shall go away into everlasting punishment.— Choose then betwixt the message of mercy, and the sentence of destruction. Christ must be your Saviour or your Destroyer. Listen now to the calls of the gospel, accept the salvation which is offered to you, and yield yourselves to the influence of holiness. Thus shall Christ be formed in you, angels on high will rejoice over you, the church on earth will acknowledge you as the redeemed of the Lord, and in you Jesus shall be glorified both now and for ever.

ADDRESS XIX.

The Birth of Christ Improved.

WHEN Moses, of old, was laid in the ark of bulrushes, by the brink of the Nile, the daughter of Pharaoh sent her maid servant to fetch it, and when she saw the child, she had compassion on it and made provision for its safety and support. Such were the circumstances of the infancy of him who was to be the deliverer of Israel from

slavery, and to be celebrated in after ages as the wisest of legislators, and the mildest of men. On that helpless babe humanity hath often looked with strong interest, and blessed the compassion which, in spite of tyrannical jealousy, and national prejudice, cherished him in her bosom. But the angel of the Lord has called you to contemplate a scene more interesting, and a babe more worthy of your attention, for he is the destined Saviour of the world. Pharaoh's daughter gave the Jewish child a name from what she had done for him. She called him Moses, because she had drawn him out of the water; but the name of this babe is Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins. This is a name dear to every heart, and celebrated in every song of the redeemed.

You have come to the manger to see the infant Saviour, and you are ready to envy the superior privilege of the shepherds; but though sense and faith were united in their exercise, your situation hath higher advantages than theirs. They saw the work of salvation in its commencement, but you have heard the triumphant shout, "It is finished." They saw the bright and morning star rising, but you behold around you the brightness of meridian day. The darkness of heathenism is scattered, and the light of truth and grace is spreading over the moral world. They saw the branch springing from the root of Jesse feeble and tender; but you behold it a vast tree, whose expanded branches afford the most refreshing shadow, and the most delicious fruit. They heard the first notes of the joyful sound; but to you it has come with all the words of eternal life, and you have received it. Let your hearts rejoice in the Saviour thus announced, and thus before you, and hear with pious raptures how he addresses you, "I am the Lord

thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour. Fear not, I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by my name, and thou art mine." "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."

After the Service.

"Now we believe not because of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world; and to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty both now and for ever." Sweet to the Saviour is this language when it is dictated by faith and love. The language which you can employ about the Saviour is very different from that which angels must adopt. They say, "To you is born a Saviour;" but you can say, "The Saviour is born to us." They proclaim the blessings of redemption, but you share them. "Behold God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song, and he also is become my salvation." Had I their harps, Jesus would still be the theme of my praise; did I possess their powers, they should all be occupied in the service of so good a master; and was their wisdom mine, it would still be my determination to know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Imitate angels in their benevolence, generosity, and holy zeal. Malice, envy, and activity in wickedness, are the characters of devils; but good angels rejoice when the Saviour is honoured, and when man is happy. Never look with an evil eye at the prosperity of another, but rejoice with them that do rejoice, and feel happy in carrying to them any pleasing intelligence.

You may be sometimes called to go with sorrowful tidings to others ; and in discharging the trying office with prudence and sympathy, endeavour to mingle with them the consoling messages of the gospel. The incidents of the day, and the trifling talk of levity and folly will be as unsuitable to them as songs to a heavy heart, but the word of salvation in its grace and power, will be as cold waters to a thirsty soul. Let these good tidings be your own comfort in every time of need. Amidst the terrors of guilt think of the Almighty Saviour. In the midst of affliction repair to him as the hope of Israel and the Saviour in the time of trouble. In your anxieties about the eternal welfare of your friends, remember the common salvation, and the extent and riches of Christ's power and grace. In the ruin of your earthly comforts look up to him in whom is all your felicity, and when death comes, let your lips close with the Saviour's praise, and the last throb of your heart rise with the joy of his salvation.

Let the moral virtues be esteemed and practised by you as they ought. A holy life is with him the most valued homage. Honour his religion and cause by the purity of your manners, the meekness of your spirits, the stedfastness of your faith, and the usefulness of your lives. The everlasting kingdom of your Lord and Saviour is before you, and this is the way by which you shall enter into it abundantly. In that kingdom salvation shall be your crown, and the great God your Saviour shall be your glory. Now is your salvation nearer than when you first believed. Advance in your journey to it with a more lively hope than ever ; and may grace and peace be with you from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

ADDRESS XX.

JOHN X. 10.

“ I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

WHAT an interesting view of the object of our Lord's coming is this ! It was not the end of his coming to inflict on us the punishment which we deserved, and to consign us to the horrors of the second death. Though this had been its object, none could have accused him of injustice, and none could have repelled his hand. But he came to procure for us spiritual and eternal life by the death of the cross, to raise us from a state of condemnation to peace with God, and not only to remove the pollution of our souls, and the miseries of our hearts, but to adorn them with the graces of his image, and to fill them with the joys of his Spirit. It is a most striking phrase which is here employed to represent the excellence of his salvation, and it points out for your present meditation the privileges of redemption, as far surpassing all that man possessed before the fall.

The righteousness which the saints possess far transcends that of Adam in innocence, which was only the righteousness of a creature, which could not of itself merit the blessedness of heaven, and which was liable to change. But the righteousness of Christ is divine ; it entitles to glory, and it is everlasting. Our first pa-

rents in innocence were excelled by angels in the brightness of their powers, the fervour of their affections, and the sublimity of their worship ; yet so conscious are they of their inferiority to the “ Lord our Righteousness,” that in his presence they cover their faces with their wings, and celebrate the worth of the Lamb that was slain, while not a harp is silent throughout all their orders, and not a thought questions his unrivalled glory.

The covenant made with you is far more excellent than the one made with Adam. The covenant of works was made immediately with Adam, but the covenant of grace was made with Christ as the head and mediator of his people. The promises of the covenant of works were conditional, but those of the covenant of grace are free. In the covenant of works, the divine pity and compassion could not be exhibited, but the covenant of grace displays the tender mercies of our God. The covenant of works contained no security for the continuance of Adam in innocence, and it held out neither comfort nor hope to the guilty ; but the covenant of grace is a refuge for the miserable, and in the use of the appointed means of watchfulness and prayer, it provides for the perseverance in holiness of all who are brought within its bond. God will not abandon them, and he will not suffer them to turn away from him. In this covenant Jehovah glories as displaying his wisdom and his love ; it is the study and delight of good men while they live, and they have spent their last breath in expressing the confidence and the hope which it had inspired. How delightful have been the views which good men have had of it at the communion table, while they beheld it ratified in the blood of the cross, and it is my earnest wish that you may now be influenced to say of it, “ It is all my sal-

vation, and it is all my desire." This covenant is the ark in which the pious are secure when the floods swell, and in which they are kept in perfect peace, while the hearts of worldly men are failing them for fear in seasons of private calamity, or public disaster.

The grace formed in Christians is superior to that possessed by Adam. He was created in the image of God ; and though this image, as restored in regeneration, is not completed till the hour of death, it is distinguished by excellencies not to be found in the character of the first man ; and when it reaches its destined perfection, the new creature shall be filled with all the fulness of God. The Spirit of Christ dwelt not in Adam. In a paradise where every tree flourished good for food, or pleasant to the eye, that faith could not operate which rejoices in God in the gloomiest scene of want and desolation. In the state of perfect innocence there could be no place for the repentance which is to God a pleasing sacrifice ; and, amidst perfect felicity, the fortitude and patience could not be displayed which glory in tribulation. Had Adam retained his integrity, the absence of all misery would have precluded those exertions of sympathy and beneficence which are so good and so acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour. In the scene of unmingled kindness, there could be no call for that forbearance and forgiveness which must be so often exercised in a world where offences so frequently come, and in which the generous power of the Christian temper is so strikingly manifested in repressing the fiercest impulse of nature.

We read of a river that went out of Eden to water the garden, but there that living water did not flow which sanctifies the polluted, and quickens the dead. There was the tree of knowledge of good and evil, but man was prohibited to touch it ; and the tree of life,

which was guarded from his approach. But you are invited to draw near to Him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and who is the bestower of grace and glory.

Like the prodigal son, who had returned to his father's house, ye feel a gratitude and a joy beyond that of the elder brother who had never left it; and while your gracious parent clothes you with the best robe, and satisfies you as with marrow and fatness, angels will not complain of your reception, or envy your felicity, but will magnify the Lord with you.

After the Service.

The enjoyments of the redeemed are also superior to those of Adam in innocence. Were we to suppose that good men were only raised by Christ to the enjoyments with which Adam was blessed, the remembrance of the guilt and misery which preceded them must give them a sweetness which could not be felt by one to whom sin and sorrow were unknown. In walking with God, he could not feel that degree of delight of which you are conscious at a communion table, when you remember that you were once afar off, and were brought nigh by the blood of Jesus. In partaking of the pleasures of paradise, he could not be conscious of that exquisite gratitude which you feel while you are in the garden of your beloved, and eating his pleasant fruit; when you remember your wanderings in the land of drought, and of the shadow of death. No flower of paradise could charm the eye, or the smell, like the Rose of Sharon; and no dominion over the works of God, and no homage paid by man to the Deity, as

“the priest of nature,” can be compared to that royal priesthood to which redemption advances you.

There will be many things in the heaven of the redeemed which could not have been found in that of innocent Adam. The heaven of Adam would have wanted the memorials of the Lamb’s sufferings, the song of his worth, and the participation of his glory. The Lamb in the midst of the throne, as it had been slain, is the most interesting object in heaven to a redeemed sinner ; the song of the Lamb is the sweetest of its anthems ; and the marriage supper of the Lamb is the most delightful of its enjoyments. To these objects let your hearts now rise, and let them give a heavenly tendency to all your future conduct.

Christians, you are here presented with an answer to this question which has long perplexed the reflecting mind, “why such an event as the fall of man was permitted to take place under the government of a holy and benevolent Being ?” God suffered man to fall, because he had determined by the mediation of his Son to raise the objects of his mercy to a nobler excellence, and to a sublimer felicity. We are told that, at the erection of the second temple, many of the fathers who had seen the first, wept sore, because it was so inferior to it in magnificence and glory ; but when we contemplate the building of mercy, we may rejoice in its being in all respects superior to that which was reared when man was made upright. How lofty are its towers, and how beautiful its palaces ! This is my rest for ever ; I will walk round it now in holy admiration, mark it with rapture, advancing to its destined consummation, and hope to join in the shout with which its head-stone will be brought forth, “Grace, grace unto it.”

Your Lord gloried in avowing that it was the object of his coming to give this life. The conqueror who

comes to pillage and to subjugate a country, hath no reason to boast of this, for no glory can arise from the tears of the oppressed, the desolation of the flourishing, and the slaughter of the helpless ; but Jesus came to loose the bands of wickedness, to bless the miserable, and to save the lost. He felt the greatest complacency in this object. He knew that, in order to our acceptance, purity, and salvation, he must be forsaken of God, and crucified as a malefactor, and that, ere the blessings of the new covenant could be imparted to us, he must encounter the united rage of earth and hell ; but he saw the bright glories which would arise from his cross to God, and the high felicity which would result from it to man, and, in the prospect of it, was eager to advance, and willing to die. This coming of your Lord deserves your most cordial welcome. When he rode into Jerusalem, the multitude spread their garments, and strewed branches of trees in the way, and shouted, Hosanna to the Son of David ; and this is a pattern for you to copy. Let us spread in his way all our talents and all our attainments, and let our blessings rest on his head.

Let your labours in Christ's service be abundant. Satisfy not yourselves with a partial victory over corruption, with a scanty donation to the cause of piety and charity, when it is in the power of your hand to give more, with a hasty visit to the house of mourning, and with a few feeble efforts to promote the interests of your Redeemer's kingdom, or a formal observance of the exercises of devotion. Crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, do good to all as you have opportunity, bear one another's burdens, be zealous supporters of every plan for enlightening and for improving society, and fervent in spirit serving the Lord.

Envy not the men of the world, when their corn, and

their wine, and their oil, abound. In the fulness of their sufficiency they are in straits. When surrounded with what others deem all the materials of happiness, they feel that something is wanting, the attainment of which they consider as essential to their fame or their pleasure, and they can carry nothing hence. The hand that counted its thousands of gold and silver shall in death be as empty as that of the beggar, and the pampered glutton shall only be the fuller repast for the worm. But in your portion ye feel a joy suited to its extent, value, and security. "All things are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

Rejoice that Christ will still come in the influences of his grace to quicken and to save. There are many objects of his mercy who are to rise into being in the different ages of the world, with regard to whom Jesus feels, "them also must I bring in," sanctify, and save; and ye may exult in the blessed hope of his second coming, when he will swallow up death in victory. In changing your vile bodies, and fashioning them like to his own glorious body, he will give them a beauty and a splendour, a vigour and activity, capacities for service and enjoyment which they never possessed here. Then will Jesus feel the joy which was set before him, consummated, when he is glorified in the perfect excellence and felicity of his saints, and is admired in all them that believe.

ADDRESS XXI.

ACTS IV. 13.

“ They took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.”

SUCH was the impression produced on the Jewish council by the behaviour of Peter and John before them. They had expected that the majesty of the court would awe them into silence, that, if they did speak, they would be easily put to confusion by their threats and cavils, and that their defence would be the feeble and hesitating apology of perplexity and fear. But they beheld in them a courage which proceeded from the spirit of power, an energy which struck their consciences, and a wisdom with which their craft and subtlety were unable to contend. They saw in them those qualities which they had so often dreaded and envied in their Master, that they shone with his light, and pleaded with his zeal. It had been the privilege of these disciples to be for a considerable time the associates of Jesus ; and such were the lessons which he had given them respecting truth and duty, and all divine and heavenly objects ; and such were the graces which he had displayed before them, that their views must have been very different from those of carnal men : the path which they pursued was far from the course of this world, and the temper that influenced them was quite opposite to its spirit. Such was the result of their being with Jesus.

But this is the privilege of good men in all ages. We cannot indeed be with him in the way in which his companions on earth were, but saints are with him when he condescends to visit them, and to maintain fellowship with them. There are various promises of the word of God in which good men are taught to expect, and to prepare for his gracious presence. "If any man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him." "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." It is not the number, but the piety of his worshippers which attracts his presence.

The offices which Jesus sustains, suggest arguments to prove the reality of this fellowship. He is their friend, and he will visit them with the proofs of his care and regard; he is their counsellor, and he will direct their steps; and he is their physician, and he will bind up their wounds. To him is committed the care of their interests, the supply of their wants, and the culture of their graces; and this requires his presence and continued influence. And the experience of good men in various scenes attests the reality of this privilege. In the scene of danger and suffering, he hath been with them to support their courage, and to ensure their safety; in the season of temptation, he has enabled them to avoid its snares, and to resist its assaults; in the hour of solitude, they have felt that they were not alone, for Jesus was with them; on the bed of sickness, they have enjoyed his soothing pity and effectual support, and in the ordinances of his grace, they have seen the beauty of the Lord, while they inquired in his temple.

In the ordinance of the Lord's Supper he is peculiarly present with his disciples. It is at such a scene that "he brings them into his banqueting house, and that

his banner over them is love." Ye know this from your past, and, may I add, from your present experience; and if this is the case, you feel how love burns, how hope is animated, how griefs and fears are forgotten, and how joy abounds in his presence. You have felt pleasure in the society of the wise who could instruct you, the good who could sooth you, and the friends who loved you; but communion with Jesus now, can be equalled and exceeded only by the bliss of heaven. There are evils which human sympathy cannot alleviate, and difficulties in which earthly wisdom cannot guide; but Jesus can make darkness light before us, and comfort against grief on every side.

The Scriptures record many delightful testimonies to the reality and sweetness of communion with Jesus, and these testimonies are not the language of the weak and the credulous, of persons of strong imaginations and ardent tempers; but of men the most remote from any thing like folly or presumption. The object which they had in view, in detailing their high privilege, was not to gratify their own vanity, or to secure their dominion over the faith of others, by teaching them to regard them as the special favourites of heaven; but to honour the grace of Jesus, and to encourage others to seek the happiness of piety.

It belongs to your Lord to determine the place where his presence is to be enjoyed, the season of this fellowship, and the degree in which his saints shall be conscious of it. Wherever the place is, they may be assured that none of its confusions shall be permitted to disturb their tranquillity, and that its miseries shall not drive him away. If they are with him but for a moment, they feel that it becomes not them to complain, who deserved the blackness of darkness for ever, and who hope to spend eternity in his immediate presence.

Nay, you ought not to repine that you behold him darkly as through a glass, and hear but a few whispers of his voice ; for even of this you are unworthy ; and that world is before you, where you shall see as you are seen, and know him even as you are known.

You have heard the solemn injunction, " prepare to meet thy God, O Israel," and I trust that those who are now favoured with his presence, are exciting every faculty of their souls, and every affection of their hearts, to magnify his name ; and let those who long for his arrival, but to whom he hath not yet appeared, observe the indications of his approach. " It is the voice of my beloved, behold he cometh." I am certain there is not one that knows how to value and improve this privilege, but will say with Jacob, " I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."

After the Service.

Now what is the temper and conduct by which you will make it manifest that you have been with Jesus ? It is well known how ready we are to imbibe the spirit, and to adopt the manners of those to whom we are strongly attached, and with whom we frequently associate. Even where the imitation was not intended, we slide into it insensibly. Now intercourse with the Saviour produces conformity to his image ; and as the man who has been handling perfumes will carry a fragrant scent with him wherever he goes, so he who has been with his Lord, will manifest the savour of his name in every place.

Superiority to the world will evince your communion with Jesus. Such beauties are seen in the Saviour's character, that the eye which has been gazing on them,

turns with disgust from the world's attractions. Good men discern such a value in his salvation, that the possession of it forms the grand object of their pursuit; and such a certainty and preciousness do they perceive in his promises, that the most flattering prospects of the world appear to them as idle dreams. In order to learn this superiority to the world, we need not repair to the schools of heathen philosophy, or to the cells of monkery to get our minds perverted, or our hearts deadened by the unnatural apathy of the one, or the gloomy austerities of the other; but let us go to the feet of Jesus. I call on you who are now with him, to seek more earnestly the things which are above, and to shew that his voice has closed your ears to the world's flatteries, and his glory your eyes to its vain shew.

Tenderness of conscience and circumspection of conduct, will also make it evident that you have been with Jesus. In communion with him you have the liveliest impressions of the purity of his nature, and such seems the importance of his favour, and such the beauty of his unspotted rectitude, that it becomes the most earnest wish of his people, to avoid every thing which would displease him. Indulgences which seem to others excusable, you must carefully shun; and omissions which to others appear to be without blame, you must avoid as indications of ingratitude to Christ, and indifference to your duty. This moral delicacy and caution are quite different from the scrupulosity of hypocrites. They are scrupulous only in matters of trivial moment, and their austerity is accompanied with bitter reflections on those who are less reserved than they are; but the circumspection and self-denial of the pious, is always accompanied with mildness and liberality in their judgment of others. See that you abstain from every appearance of evil. How soon does the

canker which has smitten one leaf spread over the whole plant! "Happy is the man that feareth alway."

Humility will shew that you have been with Jesus. It has been often asserted that the idea of communion with the Deity, tends to puff men up with pride; but the vision of the Saviour's glory, must produce an affecting impression of our own vileness; and the reception of his favours will make us feel more strongly how unworthy we are. Does Jesus visit a heart so corrupted, and shall that heart be haughty? When we behold good men meek and lowly in circumstances where others would be haughty and insolent; when we see them rejoicing in the attainments of others, although they throw theirs into the shade; when their deportment in prosperity proves that they speak the truth, when they say, "I am not worthy of the least of thy mercies;" and when their behaviour in adversity shews that they feel the necessity of God's chastening rod, and welcome it as a blessing, we feel that they have learned from the presence and the example of Jesus, to walk humbly with their God. "Be clothed with humility."

Kindness and charity result from fellowship with the Saviour. The scenes which are then reviewed, and the blessings which are bestowed, excite the liveliest impressions of his love to men; and the heart, affected with his grace, must melt in compassion and charity, and the various efforts of beneficence required by the miseries of our fellow-creatures, appear a reasonable and delightful service. When we see a good man visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction, protecting the helpless and the oppressed, enlightening the ignorant, and comforting the mourner, we are convinced that his is a heart which the love of Christ hath touched. I call on you, Christians, to do good and to

communicate, and let the devotions of this scene be followed by your alms. The hour will come when the pursuits of ambition will be deplored, and when the gains of avarice will be felt as a load on the heart; but your works of love, which have been a blessing to others, will awaken sweet reflections in your own souls. I shall only add, that by boldness in the cause of Jesus, it will be manifest that you have been with him. Such is the impression which is produced of his excellence; and so generous and steadfast was his love, that you feel that to desert him would be the greatest baseness and folly, and that you are bound to employ every talent which you possess, for his glory. You have marked the interest which Jesus takes in his cause, and his power to support it, and must be sensible that the opposition of its enemies is but the puny effort of impotent malignity. You have heard him express his approbation of the zeal you may have already shewn, and seen him pointing to the rewards prepared for the faithful on high, and such circumstances as these will surely make you valiant for the truth, and induce you to hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering.

Consider how honourable it is to the Saviour when his spirit is seen operating in his followers; and if these qualities be so amiable in his disciples, what must they be in their great original! If the mild lustre produced by the moon walking in her brightness on the calm surface of the ocean raises our admiration of the splendour of the planet which God hath appointed to rule the night; if we trace with delight the features and virtues of excellent parents in their children, the graces of his followers should remind us of him whose image they bear, and call forth our homage to him who is the brightness of the Father's glory. And it will be most honourable to yourselves to be thus characterized

as the disciples and companions of him who is the Holy One. Beware of bringing the least stain on your high vocation, and "let your light so shine before men, that others seeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is heaven. And rejoice in hope of that state where you shall be for ever with the Lord, and where perfect communion shall produce a perfect resemblance betwixt you, and where you shall be like him, for you shall see him as he is. With such a hope, how pleasant is the way of holiness, and how bright is the vale of death!

ADDRESS XXII.

JOHN VII. 37.

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink."

OUR Lord improved, with admirable propriety, the various objects and occurrences which presented themselves before him, for the purposes of religious and moral instruction. His mind was constantly intent on the great objects of his mission, and his wisdom led him to discern the most favourable seasons, and to choose the fittest methods for the advancement of these. There have been some who, from a zeal neither guided by delicacy nor prudence, have introduced serious topics after incidents by no means adapted to prepare the mind to receive them with advantage.

Dislike or laughter have thus been excited at truths which, if brought forward with more propriety, might have charmed the careless, and silenced the scornful. Nor is the mischief confined to the moment ; for whenever the scene is recollected, piety appears in a most degrading association, and the heart turns away from it in disgust. But in our Saviour's history, grace and truth are beautifully combined, and the lessons of religion were always exhibited where they were likely to be most clearly understood, and most readily received.

On the last day of the feast of tabernacles, the high priest went in solemn procession to the pool of Siloam, drew from it some water in a golden vessel, and returning to the temple poured it out before the Lord. It was at the close of this ceremony when the worshippers had been praying for the latter rain, and some of them had been imploring the Most High to bestow the spirit and the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom, that Jesus invited them to come and share of the riches of his grace.

The last day of the feast of tabernacles was called the great day of it, not on account of the sacrifice offered on it ; for while several bullocks were to be slain on the other days, the law required on the eighth and last no more than one; but the learned have told us that it was a tradition among the Jews, that while other nations had an interest in the other oblations, this one offering was restricted to Israel. On this day they viewed themselves admitted to intimate fellowship with God, as distinguished by him as his peculiar people ; and they supposed that, like an earthly prince who delights far more in a small collation with his chief favourite, that they may have an opportunity of some familiar converse, than in a vast promiscuous entertainment, God felt special complacency in this inter-

course with them, and bestowed in it his most valuable blessings. These ideas of God's peculiar interest in them, produced a rapturous joy which they were accustomed to express in all the outward tokens of triumphant exultation, and thus did this day come to be regarded as the happiest and best part of the festival. From such vain and bigoted conceits our Lord calls them to the spirit of goodness, and to the fellowship of the gospel.

Though we cannot use these words as an invitation to the communion table, they suggest many meditations which may be useful to Christians in the Lord's supper; and we, on good grounds, consider the commemoration of Christ's death as the most important service of the present solemnity. It is for this that other acts of worship are preparatory; and it is in this ordinance that the noblest actings of grace are exhibited, and our friendship with Christ is most delightfully sealed.

But who are the persons whom our Lord invites to partake of the blessings of his grace? They are such as thirst for happiness. This is the object of universal desire and pursuit, for wherever we cast our eyes, we see proofs of the existence and operation of this principle, and find reason to lament its improper direction. Some seek it in the acquisition of wealth, others in the career of ambition; some in the indulgence of appetite, and others in curious inquiries, or in vain speculation. Men thus low in their views, and thus carnal in their taste, have no relish for the blessings, and no capacity for the exercise of religion, and are regardless of these amidst their eager solicitude for earthly things. But though the object of ardent pursuit should be attained, the heart is still unsatisfied, and, after a sad series of disappointed hopes, it sinks under the consciousness

that all is vanity. Now to such wanderers Christ directs his pitying counsel ; and, while he blames their folly, calls them to the fountain of life and joy

Christians, ye were once engaged in following vanity, and you would have persisted in it unless divine grace had shewed you your folly, and taught you where to find rest. It was thus that Jesus qualified you for observing this ordinance, by elevating your desires, purifying your taste, and imbuing you with the spirit of devotion.

But this invitation of our Lord is addressed to those who are earnestly desirous of the blessings of salvation, who have been convinced of their guilt, corruption, and misery, and whose eyes are directed to the cross of Jesus as the only quarter where relief can be obtained. Have you felt the wish that the voice of pardon would still your accusing consciences, and that the power of divine grace would subdue your evil passions ? Would you esteem it a favour worthy of your perpetual gratitude, were you to obtain one glimpse of hope, one drop from the fountain of mercy, one moment of holy peace ? The water of life can alone moisten the parched throat, and can alone cool the burning heart. Jesus only can teach the despairing soul to hope, and enable the slave of corruption to break his chains, and to become free.

In Jesus Christ every thing is to be found that is necessary for the soul's happiness and salvation. Here there is instruction by which the dark and perverted mind is taught to know and to love the truth—righteousness which answers every charge, and entitles to every blessing—sanctification which forms in the soul the temper of heaven—consolation which quiets every alarm, and heals every wound—and redemption, which liberates every faculty of the soul from the thralldom

of sin, and every member of the body from the power of the grave.

The way to this fountain of life is open. Springs famed for their salubrious qualities are often situated in places which it is very difficult to approach ; but to this fountain there is a path so plain that the simple will not err, if the desire of his heart is directed to the Saviour. It is described clearly in the Bible ; and it has been trode by thousands. " Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access into that grace in which believers stand."

Have you, my friends, made application to Christ by faith for salvation ? Unless this has been the case, you have no right to approach his table. Have you turned away from every false hope, and are you willing to receive him in his whole character as a Saviour ? Have you been persuaded of the all-sufficiency of his grace, and are you determined that you will never solicit pardon but at his feet ? This is the language of the truly humble and contrite, " Though not a drop of the water of life should be vouchsafed to me, and though I should suffer most painfully from tormenting thirst, yet I will never seek relief any where else. I will cry to him for mercy while utterance remains, and when my tongue, failing for thirst, can articulate the language of supplication no longer, my looks, and sighs, and tears, will shew that this is the strongest wish of my heart, Lord save me, I perish." Such desires have been awakened by the holy Spirit, such purposes are animated by his grace, and for you his living water is prepared. He will make you drink of the rivers of his pleasures, and bless you with some measure of his own felicity.

After the Service.

Application to Christ by faith for his blessings is followed by the sweetest satisfaction. The pleasure felt by the thirsty traveller in the refreshing draught, for which he has journeyed through clouds of dust, and over burning sands, is an emblem of their felicity, who having believed enter into rest. As it will not be with a single draught that this traveller will be satisfied, so grace will be importunate for further measures of light, holiness, and comfort ; and Jesus invites us to drink abundantly. And while other streams are dried up, this fountain ever flows, and is ever full. The more of Christ's Spirit you receive, you will be the more holy ; and your happiness will increase according as you share in the joys of his salvation. Let not the penitent hesitate to approach this fountain, and let not his hand tremble as it lifts the cup of salvation to his lips. You can see no indication in his countenance that you are unwelcome, and hear nothing from him to shake your confidence in his gracious promise, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Never was a penitent excluded from his house, and never was a humble suppliant sent empty away.

Some of you perhaps have not found the joy in believing which you had anticipated? but this is owing to the weakness of your faith, or to your having displeased him by some presumption in your hopes, or some selfishness in your wishes. He intends to try your submission to his will, and your patience under disappointments ; and if you suffer with meekness, and pray without ceasing, he will bless you with the peace that passeth understanding.

The circumstances connected with this invitation present to you the most interesting views of our Lord's

character, and many practical counsels. It shows us the patience and generosity of our Lord in a most striking light. He had told the Jews that in a little he would go to him that sent him. Instead of imploring his continuance, they said with the most virulent scorn, "Will he go to the dispersed Jews among the Gentiles, and try to gain them to his party, or will he teach the Gentiles?" These things they deemed incompatible with the character of Messiah, and the last expedient of a sinking impostor. And how does our Lord answer this insolent taunt? The only reply he makes to it is, to invite them more fully, and to press them more earnestly to receive his salvation. Let us learn from this conduct to reflect with wonder and gratitude on his long-suffering to us, and to persist in our efforts to convince and to reclaim the wicked in spite of all their stubbornness, and though we should receive from them the most abusive treatment. "Consider him who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied, and faint in your minds."

This invitation was delivered with great boldness. He stood on some high place in the temple, where he might be seen by all around. Though the officers were at hand who were commissioned to seize him, though the Pharisees and Scribes were in an adjacent chamber plotting his destruction, and though many of the people were prejudiced against him, he did not skulk in a secret corner, but stood in the view of all, undaunted in the cause, and confiding in the protection of his Father. And let none of you, from the dread of the ridicule of the world, or the sarcasms of the scoffer, be afraid to testify your adherence to Christ. Let us not hesitate to confess him before men, who was so courageous in instructing and saving us.

It was delivered with great earnestness. He lifted up his voice in such a manner that the surrounding multitude might hear him. Jesus saw them sunk in ignorance and depravity ; the prejudices which induced many to turn away from his counsel ; the strong delusions by which their false guides had infatuated them, and the misery to which they were hurrying ; and he spoke to them in a tone and manner adapted to engage their attention and to win their hearts. And let this induce you to cherish and to express an ardent and affectionate zeal for the spiritual good of others, and while you “ remember your affliction and misery, the wormwood and the gall,” you will feel increasing energy in urging their approach to the wells of salvation.

It was a most extensive invitation. He excepts not the men who came to seize him, nor those who were bent on his ruin. The hand of mercy can reach its object in the lowest depth of distress, and in the utmost extremity of guilt. Such is the liberality of Christ’s heart, and such is the power of his grace, that he makes the sinner welcome to approach him from the ends of the earth, and from the brink of hell. Let him come, though he is the chief of sinners, and though he has grown old in iniquity. Let him come and bring multitudes with him ; and if none will accompany him, let him draw near alone, and though the whole world should call on him to keep back. Let him come although he has nothing to recommend him to my notice, for the water of life flows, not for those that deserve, but for those that need it. Let him approach with enlarged expectations, and let him be assured that he cannot come too frequently. Keep this circumstance in remembrance, to give extension to all your offices of charity, to teach you to resist the error of those who

would limit the calls of the gospel, to support your own hope in Christ when God is writing bitter things against you, and to enable you to repress in others every suggestion of despair.

It is a striking circumstance in this invitation, that it was delivered at the close of a great religious solemnity. For several days the Jews had been observing one of their solemn feasts, and the people were now about to retire from the temple, and some of them were to go to distant parts of the country, where they might never see or hear our Lord any more. He had already preached salvation to them on some of the preceding days, yet he cannot think of parting with them till he had called them in a most liberal and earnest manner to take the water of life. An offer of mercy is Christ's farewell. These were his parting words, and we trust that they were spirit and life to some.

When our solemnities are closing, and the worshippers are going away and shall not all meet again in one assembly till they appear together in judgment, the ministers of religion should part with them as our Lord did, and speak to them as if we saw them on their death-beds, or were addressing them from our own. Let them carry the offers of mercy to their houses, to their business, and to their last hour. You should retire from the temple as if you were going into eternity, and feel as if the last cry of mercy had reached your ears, and as if the light of life had shined on you its parting gleam. To some of you this may be the last communion, in a few days the rage of disease may dry up your strength, and your soul, thirsting for Jesus, may cry "Hear me speedily, O Lord, my spirit faileth." His grace shall not fail you in time of need. He will form you to a tranquil patience

and to a joyful hope ; and when your appointed course of suffering is ended, he will conduct you to your eternal rest, “ where the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed you, and lead you to living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes.” Amen.

ADDRESS XXIII.

ROMANS v. 7, 8.

“ Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

IN these words the Apostle is supposed to allude to a distinction of characters which the Jews were accustomed to make. They used to represent society as consisting of the righteous, who rigidly regulated their conduct by the letter of the law ; the good, who made themselves beloved by their beneficence ; and the atrociously wicked, who were the disgrace and the pest of the nation. This language and classification of theirs Paul employs to illustrate the wondrous love of God in the sacrifice of his Son. His own soul was filled with the most fervid impressions of his love, and he was solicitous to produce such impressions in the minds of others. May those who lead your devotions now speak to you with such light and warmth, and may the love of God be shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Ghost.

The Apostle states that scarcely for a righteous man will one die. Strict justice commands our respect

and our confidence ; but if it is not associated with other qualities of a milder and more beneficent cast, it is not so likely to engage our affection. We know that such a man will do us no injury ; but it is not from him that we expect any self-denial to relieve, or any exertion to oblige us. Such a man is not deemed entitled to any costly sacrifice from us, or to any painful effort for his happiness. To respect his rights as he does ours, and to render to him his due, is considered as fulfilling all his claims. It may happen that a man distinguished for integrity and justice in a high station, and whose administration of the law has been of signal advantage to a country, may be so venerated, that some, under the impulse of such feelings, may be willing at any risk to save him from the hand of violence, and to put their lives in jeopardy for his security ; but in every state of society selfishness has been so powerful as to render such displays of public spirit very uncommon.

With regard to the good, the Apostle speaks with much more confidence. It requires a strong effort to brave death, but gratitude for a good man's kindness, and a wish to spare so useful a member to the community, may induce some to lay down their lives to preserve his. It is beneficence which is most likely to be honoured with this willing sacrifice. Power may compel, and wealth may bribe the victim which is substituted for them, but beneficence leads it to the altar, and binds it with cords of love. There have been instances in which persons have ascended the scaffold for another, or rushed forward to receive the murderous weapon aimed at another's breast, but it was for the friend whom they loved as their own souls, for the master who had acted to them as a father, for the instructor who had reclaimed them from

error and iniquity, for the patron who had loaded them with favours, or for the patriot whose death might quench the light of Israel. History records some examples of this substitution, and amidst the numberless proofs which it exhibits of the fury of the malignant passions, it is delightful to contemplate such instances of the power of gratitude and of the kind affections. Paul, in this epistle, speaks of some "who had for his life laid down their own necks."

But who will die for sinners, to save the thief, the traitor, or the murderer, from an infamous death? Unless there are favourable circumstances in their case, they are left to their doom without a wish for their pardon; and though their punishment may be regretted by their companions in iniquity, they will purchase their own safety, if it is necessary, by giving evidence against their partners in crime. The more holy a man is, the stronger are his impressions of the wickedness of the sinner; and he would not aid the escape, nor take the place of a criminal in whom he sees something to excite his pity, but more to deserve his abhorrence. But herein "God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

That your minds may be more strongly affected with this love, consider who it is that is sent to die for us. The more exalted in rank, and the more excellent in character the person is who is sent by another to promote our interest, we are the more impressed with his regard. We are especially struck with it if he is one nearly related to our benefactor, and high in his esteem. In applying these remarks to this topic, you will see how they enhance the love of God. He who was sent to be the propitiation for our sins was the Son of God, equal in dignity and perfection to

himself. He is the Wisdom of God, the Holy One and the Just, and the Almighty. In him the happiness of Jehovah centres, and none is his by a tie so near, by a love so strong, or by a devotedness so perfect. Angels who had witnessed the endearing intercourse betwixt the Father and the Son, must have been amazed at seeing him abased whom they were commanded to worship, him afflicted by Jehovah who was daily his delight, and when they contrasted the bosom of the Father, and the throne of the Highest, with the poverty of the manger, and the agony of the cross.

Consider farther the death to which God delivered him. It is only temporal death which is endured for the righteous and the good ; its agonies are soon over, and in such a case it is sweetened by all the pleasing reflections which generous conduct inspires, and by the deep interest of admiration and sympathy which it excites in the spectators. Besides, it is the inevitable law that man must die, and to these substitutes for the righteous and the good, death must have come in a few years at most. It was but anticipating an event which must have soon happened, and relinquishing only a few years of existence which might have been years of little enjoyment and of much trouble. But the death of Christ was marked by peculiar infamy, exquisite pain, and lingering anguish. Besides, death was to him not the result of necessity of nature but of choice ; and so far was he from being soothed by the pity of the spectators, that they passed by the cross in bitter derision. There were also sufferings in his soul, the severity of which it is impossible for us to conceive. And when we think that God was the inflicter of this anguish, that by him the

stroke was given, and the curse was executed, we cannot but exclaim, "Herein is love."

Consider also the character of those for whom this was done. The persons for whom others have died, had some claims to this sacrifice, in their rectitude and beneficence, but sinners are the objects of deserved abhorrence. They are not to be viewed merely as wretched, but as criminal. They are not criminals who are chargeable with only one transgression, or who are bewailing their wickedness, and casting themselves on the Judge's mercy, but offenders who have committed innumerable crimes, and who are obstinate in their trespasses, and glory in their shame. This is a mournful but just account of human nature, and you feel that it is so. Sovereign grace selects its objects from among persons of this description; and those set apart for salvation are not thus distinguished because their crimes are fewer or less atrocious than those of others, but because thus it seemed good in God's sight. Now for such sinners Christ died; he became "legally answerable" for their sins, and suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. That heart bleeds not for the innocent but for the wicked, and it is broken not for the worthy, but for the chief of sinners.

The doctrine of our Lord's substitution, and of the vicarious nature of his sufferings, is plainly taught in this passage. The dying for the righteous and the good, is not dying merely for their benefit, but in their stead; and Christ's dying for us must have the same meaning. He endured the doom to which we were liable, and which must have overwhelmed us if he had not interposed in our behalf. The King of glory is crucified for the rebellious. By this sacrifice the sinner is not only saved from wrath, but formed to gra-

titude, contrition, and obedience ; and what no severity of punishment could have effected, is accomplished by the blood of the cross. Thus Jehovah testified in the strongest manner his detestation of sin, and thus he obtained that satisfaction to his justice, and that honour to his law, which the personal sufferings of the offenders, though protracted to eternity, could never have yielded.

Now, Christians, what are your views of this love ? Are you saying, "How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God !" and is this the sentiment which is influencing all your feelings, and prompting all your worship, "God is love ?" Have you come to the table of your Lord, confessing that your character is such as this passage describes, and pleading "God be merciful to me a sinner ?" If this is the case, he will visit you with his abundant grace ; and while you behold in Christ's broken body and shed blood his matchless love, may you feel resolved to live to him, and to die to him.

After the Service.

HATH God thus given up his Son to death for you ? hesitate not to resign your dearest comforts to him. They were his gift, and they have often been forfeited by your unworthy conduct. You should reflect that they might have been demanded sooner, and that it is your duty to bless him for the opportunity of showing the impression which his love hath made, and the influence which it hath upon you. It is at the cross of Jesus that the reluctance of nature is most readily and completely overcome. It was the virtue of the cross which enabled that mother to lay her child in its coffin without a murmur, and to assent to the expressions of

resignation used by the pious beside her in prayer. It is this that strengthens the good man to say to those whose wailings are disturbing his last moments, "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart, I am ready to die at the commandment of the Lord Jesus." Had you been required, I ought to have been willing to surrender you, and when I am called away it becomes you to rejoice because I go to the Father.

Let not the corruptions of your hearts be spared. It was for their destruction that Christ hath done and suffered so much, and if you cherish them, you labour to frustrate the end of his death, and to destroy the happiness of your own souls. How urgent are Jehovah's calls to abstain from fleshly lusts ! and what he requires is not the laceration of the flesh, the bowing of the head, or monastic seclusion from the affairs of life, but the rending of the heart, the humiliation of the soul, and the careful avoidance of the follies and sins of the world. Self-indulgence may urge many powerful pleas, and may paint the hardships of self-denial in very terrifying colours ; but the faith of that statement of the Apostle will guard you from yielding to its influence : " If ye live after the flesh ye shall die, but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

Lay all that you are and have at the feet of Jesus. Lay your souls and bodies there, that he may employ their powers in his service. Place your possessions there, that he may be honoured with your substance ; your burdens, that he may bear them for you ; your duties, that he may present them with acceptance ; your attainments, that in them he may be honoured ; and your hopes, that he may destroy them if presumptuous, and fulfil them if it will be glorifying to him and safe for you. And I call upon you to place your sick and dying friends before him, that he

may do with them what seemeth good in his sight, and there let your last prayer be made, your last pang be felt, and your last breath be drawn. This is the prelude to your casting your crowns at his feet. There is not a gem in that crown which is not his. This, O my Redeemer, is thy heaven, thy bliss, and thy glory. It is thine in purchase and bestowal, and mine in possession.

Maintain a strict regard to integrity and justice. Without these principles society would be a scene of misery, where the simple and the helpless would be the dupes of the fraudulent, and the victims of the oppressor. Nothing has a more unhappy influence in strengthening the prejudices of worldly men against religion, than the appearance of fraud or dishonesty in any of its professors ; and they are eager to represent the forms of piety, and zeal for its diffusion, as instruments of deceit, or as intended as a compensation for moral delinquencies. To justice add goodness, which is one of the most beautiful fruits of piety, and one of the great instruments which are destined for the healing of the nations. Without it how soon would the solitary sufferer sink under his burden, and the child of prosperity loathe his lonely pleasures ! Without it justice would want its best support, and devotion its best ally. It makes us feel the rights, the sorrows, and the miseries of our brethren as our own ; and, purified from every tincture of pride and envy, it will characterize the redeemed of the Lord for ever.

And when you think on what God did in love and pity for the salvation of sinners, you will feel yourselves impelled to use every effort in your power to enlighten and reclaim the wicked around you. It is not by Pharisaic haughtiness that they will be inclined to the love of excellence ; and though severity may be

necessary to check their excesses, yet this is not the most effectual means for their reformation. It is by instruction and counsel, expressed in the tone of compassion and kindness, that you will gain their attention. What a noble moral experiment has been made in some of our prisons, and how gratifying has been its result ! The most audacious criminals have melted in penitence, and the scene of idleness, profligacy, and impiety, is now enlivened by cheerful labour, characterized by decency, and blessed by devotion. O let us not deem any too vile for our pity, or too abandoned for our efforts to convert them from the error of their ways.

Let the remembrance of what you were when this love beheld you in your low estate, and the consciousness of what you still are, repress every rising of pride and vain glory. Ye were not only unworthy of this wondrous interposition in your behalf, but are without a claim in yourselves to any of the blessings with which it has loaded you. Arise then from the communion table to walk humbly with your God, as well as to do justly, and to love mercy. There is no disposition more becoming in a Christian, and none which is a greater ornament to religion. It will incline you to that condescension to others which is so amiable in the sight of men, and to that patience under adverse dispensations which is of great price in the estimation of heaven. It will preserve justice from every act of rigour, and goodness from being puffed up by the praise of the world, or chilled by the ingratitude of the thankless. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs are the privileges of the church on earth, and of the redeemed in heaven.

ADDRESS XXIV.

MATTH. XXVII. 51.

“ And the earth did quake, and the rocks rent.”

THE deaths of some persons who have made a great figure in the world have been represented as attended with wonderful prodigies. Nature has been exhibited as attesting by tempests and inundations, her interest in the warrior's fall, and showing by the strife of elements the influence of such events on the moral world. But it is easy to perceive in such narratives the art of a venal flatterer, inventing what might aggrandize the event; or the simplicity of ignorance magnifying an uncommon incident into something supernatural. The swell of the language proves the labour and design of the poet and the historian to give exalted ideas of the scene, and to produce in the minds of strangers and of posterity, the deepest interest in the fate of their favourite heroes.

How different is the statement which we have in Scripture of the wonders which were exhibited at the death of Christ! These were grand beyond all that imagination had ever arrayed round the warrior's bier, and they are related with that brevity and simplicity which strike us as the characters of truth. What human genius would have represented in long and pompous descriptions, the Evangelists relate in a few words, and leave it to the majesty of the scene to fill the soul with astonishment and awe.

In contemplating the quaking of the earth, and the rending of the rocks when Jesus died, you behold the importance of that event attested which you

are now commemorating. It is an event whose influence is spread over all the ways of God, over all places of his dominion, and over all the ages of eternity; and while its power to save was proclaimed by all the orders of the blessed, and its power to destroy felt by all the legions of devils, Jehovah intended by this convulsion of nature to direct to it, and to fix on it, the solemn contemplation of all human beings. These were not signs given by nature that all was lost, but stupendous indications that the power of darkness was broken, and that the creature made subject to vanity should be released and renovated. The death of Christ is to you a cause of triumph, and that deserves not the name of a Christian assembly, or a Christian heart, where it is forgotten; but while you glory in the cross, you are taught by this incident to mingle with your exultation a holy awe.

Let me call on you, Christians, to adore the power of your God, as displayed in this earthquake. It is he who shakes the earth out of its place, and the pillars thereof tremble, who overturns the mountains, and seals up the stars. Yet think not of him with the slavish dread which forgets or disbelieves his goodness amidst the thunders of his power, for he will bind up the bruised reed, and keep in perfect peace the heart that trusts in him. Remembering your Saviour's death, you can sing in every convulsion of nature, and in every shock of adversity, "God is our refuge and our strength, therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." It is a peculiarity of this sign at the death of Christ, that its tokens remain to this day. The darkness passed away before the returning sun, the vail of the temple perished in the flames which consumed that edifice, and the graves

were soon closed on other inhabitants ; but the fissures of those rocks which are still visible, are of such a form and size as attest that they must have been produced in some awful convulsion. These rents have been often contemplated with the eye of curiosity, and superstition hath debased a scene where the Lord " made bare his holy arm ;" but let it be your exercise to reflect on it with pious wonder, and to search out the various truths, and changes, and warnings which it was intended to indicate.

This quaking of the earth, and this rending of the rocks, were an awful rebuke to the stupidity and obduracy of the Jews. We are ready to imagine that the humility and beneficence of our Lord would have softened prejudice and enmity into love ; but the stronger his claims were to their affection, the more fiercely did they persecute him, and the more powerfully his sufferings pleaded for their pity, the more vehement was their malice, and the more barbarous their insults. While the most atrocious criminal is pitied by the spectators, when he undergoes the sentence of the law, nought was heard around the cross of our Lord but the language of bitter derision. The supplications of the dying criminal are accompanied in their ascent to heaven by the ejaculations of multitudes ; but the prayers of Jesus were turned to his shame, and the taunts of the base scoffer were the only return which was made to his groans. Now, as if inanimate nature had been endowed with more sensibility than these men, the earth quaked and the rocks were rent.

Christians, you are ashamed and grieved on account of the hardness of your hearts, and ye are praying earnestly for a tender and melting spirit. Your complaints and supplications are a proof that you are not

utter strangers to pious feeling ; but, conscious of its weakness, and dreading his rebukes, beseech him to touch your hearts with that influence of the cross which softens and purifies. Look to that quaking earth and to these rending rocks, and behold a pledge of that energy which shall surround his table with broken and contrite spirits.

After the Service.

This earthquake was an indication of the utter abolition of the Jewish state and system. The perpetuity of these was the dearest hope of the Jews, and they had seen the injuries done to them by the Romans with indignation and horror. They flattered themselves that Messiah would quickly appear to drive these oppressors from their land, and to make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. It was the idea that our Lord was an enemy to their state and system, which exasperated them against him, and they thought that his death would establish Judah as in the days of old. But at that hour the glory departed from their temple, and there was a voice which cried in the rending of these rocks, " The kingdom of God is taken from you and given to a nation that shall bear the fruit thereof." The oblation on the cross had rendered their sacrifices unnecessary, their carnal ordinances were to be succeeded by a more simple homage, their bells and trumpets by the word of salvation, and their covenant of peculiarity was now utterly disannulled. In vain did they try to uphold what God had doomed to fall. At the appointed moment it tumbled down, and its blind and furious votaries were crushed in its ruins.

There is a time predicted when the Jews shall, by

subjection to Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified, be relieved from the curse which has been lying on them for ages. They shall come not to the smoke of incense, the blood of bulls and goats, narrow prejudices, and burdensome ceremonies, but to the power of prayer, and to the blood of the Lamb, to expanded charity, and to the easy yoke of evangelical obedience.— Anticipate this long expected event as a bright triumph to your Lord, and as life from the dead to the Gentile world.

The earthquake was a pledge of the changes which were to be introduced into the Gentile world by the Gospel. It was a most solemn assurance, that every system of doctrine, polity, or worship, which stood in its way, should be broken in pieces. No Pagan temple could resist his fury who had ploughed Zion like a field, no city of defence could withstand his power who had laid Jerusalem in ruins, and no crowd of foes can abide before him who has made the solemn assembly as the high places of the forest.

The rending of these rocks intimated that the water of life was now to flow among the heathen, to refresh fainting multitudes, to wash away the pollutions of the nations, and to make the desert to blossom. How delightful is it to behold Jehovah making life to flow from the death of the cross, and bringing everlasting righteousness from the scene of blood! Here we see that though the hearts of Gentile sinners might be ever so hardened, his grace should make them yield. Hearts sunk in sensuality have been inclined to self-denial, men, shameless and audacious in sin, have wept and trembled in godly sorrow, and sottish idolators have been led in enlightened piety to the throne of grace.

Rejoice, my friends, in the better state of things, which has succeeded the Jewish polity, and pray for

its universal extension. Happy are ye in the liberty with which Christ hath made you free, and in the light which he hath spread around you. In beholding our country so improved by culture, and so enriched by commerce, we think with wonder, that where the corn now waves, was once a heath or a forest, and that cities, the seats of trade or science, occupy the place where wild beasts roamed. But the gospel has produced a change far more important and blissful. Religion spreads her treasures of wisdom, and her institutions of piety and mercy over the scene of ignorance, vice, and misery, and her power is felt, and her worship is rising in districts which had been for ages devoted to superstition. Beware of doubting the universal prevalence of this religion on account of the enemies that oppose its progress, for "every valley shall be exalted, and every hill and mountain shall be laid low, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Let the purity, the liberality, and the zeal of your conduct be suited to the privileges you enjoy, and to the hope of your calling. The question, what do ye more than others? suggests the obligation of superior activity on your part in the service of your Redeemer. I hope you feel it, and will be zealous in good works.

Rejoice that Christ died thus, that he might obtain for you a peaceful end. When the wicked man dies, the heavens reveal his iniquity, and the earth rises up against him. Often have the ungodly been seen quaking in every limb, their faces covered with blackness, and their breasts heaving with agony. But the good man dies in peace, the earth opens, but it is to give him a place of rest in her bosom; the hearts of his friends are torn with grief, but there is a

Comforter whose office it is to bind them up. And when the heavens and the earth shall flee away from the face of Him that sits on the throne ; and when the creation, which was convulsed at the purchase of redemption, shall be dissolved at its consummation, ye shall stand unshaken on the Rock of Ages, and reign with Christ for ever in a kingdom that cannot be moved. Amen.

ADDRESS XXV.

MARK XV. 39.

“ And when the Centurion, who stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, ‘ Truly this man was the Son of God.’ ”

WHEN we read or hear of any remarkable event, our curiosity is excited to know what impression it produced on the spectators, whether it awakened astonishment or fear, or anger or joy ; and how these feelings were manifested. Such a desire hath been strongly felt with regard to the crucifixion of our Lord, and Providence hath gratified it by recording among other particulars, the memorable confession of the Roman Centurion.

It appears that this man was first impressed with the belief of our Lord's innocence, and that, in the course of the solemn scene, he was made to feel the strongest convictions of his divine excellence and glory. The Jews had sought to stone Jesus, for saying that God was his Father. Peter, who had made this good confession, “ Thou art the Christ the Son of the living

God," had with oaths and curses averred " I know not the man." On his declaring himself the Christ, the Son of the Blessed before the council, the high priest rent his clothes, saying, " he hath spoken blasphemy ;" but behold from the lips of a soldier and of a heathen, an ample testimony is brought to this momentous truth. It may confirm your faith, and direct and animate your profession, to consider the characters which mark this testimony. It is the second instance of a person of this rank and office doing homage to Christ. The former honoured him, by expressing his confidence in his power to heal his sick servant without coming near him ; and Jesus declared, in the language of admiration, " I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel," but this man glorified him when he was humbled to the death of the cross ; and though no approbation was expressed in the hearing of mortals, its insertion in the word of God is a proof of the estimation with which this testimony was regarded in heaven. Let us learn from it the feelings with which we ought to contemplate a crucified Saviour, and the homage that is due to him at the cross.

The centurion's testimony, though short, is full and comprehensive. From his residence in Judea, it is obvious that he must have heard of the Messiah, and of his divine character. He was aware that the sufferer had claimed the title of the Son of God, and he here confesses its justice. He acknowledges him as the Son of God, who had suffered and died in our nature ; and as such a Being could not suffer for any fault of his own, or against his will, he felt that his crucifixion must have been endured to obtain some important ends. These ends were, we trust, unfolded to him, by that Spirit who will teach the meek his way, and guide the ingenuous mind into all truth.

This testimony is expressed with great energy. It is not like the language of mere pity and hope, in which spectators speak of the characters of the dying ; but it is the opinion of one who beheld in our Lord, not only the purity of innocence, but the majesty of divinity. There is nought of conjecture or hesitancy about it ; it is the language of certain and entire persuasion.

Its abruptness is most worthy of notice. It is obviously the language of nature under strong excitement, and is not liable to the least suspicion of art or affectation. He does not preface it by any representation of its object or justice ; but, persuaded that every eye, and every thought around him, were directed to the cross where his were fixed, he breaks out at once in this devout exclamation.

Consider its boldness. It was made in opposition to the populace who had derided Christ's claim, and to the court which had condemned him for maintaining it. It might subject him to the disapprobation and contempt of his companions in command, who would be ready to imagine that he ought to have manifested more firmness of mind, and greater sternness of manner on this occasion ; and he was aware that it would be most offensive to the leading men among the Jews, who would make the most unfavourable representation of his conduct to his superiors, and thus might not only impede his promotion, but occasion the loss of his office, nay of his life ; yet he expresses with all the courage of a holy zeal, the impressions of his heart.

This is not the testimony of an associate of our Lord's, whose language might be viewed with suspicion as that of a partizan, but of a stranger, all whose prejudices were directed against Christ, and his pretensions, till they were swept away by the overpowering evidence of his innocence and dignity, presented in this scene.

It is a circumstance well worthy of our notice, that in this testimony he was joined by the Roman soldiers under his command at the cross. These hardy veterans, inured to scenes of peril and blood, and accustomed to regard the Jews with scorn and hatred, and who had mocked and abused our Lord, when he was placed in their power, were now filled with awe, and declare his greatness whom they had seen expiring in anguish and shame.

This testimony strikingly accords with those paid to Jesus at the two most remarkable periods of his life, his baptism, and his transfiguration. The voice came not from the excellent glory, but it proceeded from the lips and heart of a man under the influence of the Eternal Spirit. Heavenly wisdom spoke by this man, and its words were in his tongue. And in paying this testimony he could have no motives but the purest and the best. He had no interest to serve by it; nor can it be said that he wished to gratify his vanity, by an affectation of feeling for the sufferer; for this was quite unsuitable to what was deemed becoming in a soldier. It was prompted by a wish to do justice to injured innocence, and to insulted majesty, and to lead his revilers and murderers to repentance for their conduct.

But what led the centurion to this memorable confession? He was led to it by the wonders which attended the death of Christ. It was a notion common among the heathen, that remarkable appearances often accompanied the death of those who were dear to the gods, and this opinion might excite his attention to the import of these prodigies; but, beholding them surpassing so far every thing that he had read in the records of history, or in the fables of superstition respecting the end of men of eminence, and guided by the

Spirit of wisdom, he considered the darkened sun, the quaking earth, and the rending rocks, as the witness of heaven to the sufferer's innocence and dignity. The God of nature would not have signalized by such miracles the death of a criminal, an impostor, or an ordinary personage. The sun was eclipsed because he who forms the light was passing into the land of darkness; the veil of the temple was rent in twain from top to bottom, to shew that a spiritual guide had now appeared to abolish the carnal ordinances of a preparatory dispensation, and to call us to a purer worship, a brighter creed, and a nobler temple; the earth quakes, and the rocks are rent, to testify that the crucified Saviour was one whom all the inhabitants of the world should fear, and the graves were opened because the keys of death were now committed to its conqueror.

Fix your attention, Christians, on these wonders, and give glory to him whom all the host of heaven worships; draw near to him in spiritual homage, and beseech him to melt your hearts in holy tenderness, and to form you to newness of life. No prejudices can be too gross for him to dissipate, no hearts too obdurate for him to mollify, no characters too depraved for him to renovate, and no despair too horrible for him to change into a lively hope.

But the Centurion was led to this testimony also by the behaviour of the sufferer. If he went at the head of the armed band by whom our Lord was apprehended, he would witness the majesty of his look and voice, and the meekness and fortitude with which he resigned himself to their hands. If he was in the hall during the trial, he would behold the mild dignity of his demeanour amidst false accusations, and cruel abuse. His patience on the cross, so different from the sullen hardness of the stubborn criminal, and the affected con-

tempt of philosophic pride, his forgiveness of his enemies, his grácious assurance of admission to heaven made to the penitent thief, the signal change wrought on that man, and the earnestness with which he implored his mercy, the confidence with which he committed his soul into his Father's hands, and the loud cry with which this was expressed, so different from the feeble and broken accents of the dying, convinced him that he was the Holy One of God.

Christians, contemplate these graces till you are formed to the likeness of his death, till patience is perfected in you, till every malignant passion is extirpated from your hearts, till you learn to live and to die in faith. May the review of them at this solemn season be blessed for changing you into his image, and may you depart from that table more imbued with his Spirit, and more devoted to his will.

After the Service.

How admirably does this testimony accord with that borne to a suffering Redeemer by the prophets! Isaiah, looking to the man of sorrows, calls him, "Immanuel, God with us;" Jeremiah styles him whom you see numbered with transgressors, "The Lord our righteousness;" he who is smitten by the sword of justice, you are assured by Zechariah, is the Man who is Jehovah's fellow; to the sacrifice that bleeds on the altar, the Baptist points as the Lamb of God; and Thomas, beholding his pierced hands and side, cries out, in what has been, I trust, the language of your hearts, "My Lord and my God."

Does your faith see nothing in the death of Christ

to call forth from you this testimony? Behold the enemies he vanquishes. The powers of darkness crowded around the cross; they thought that victory now would more than repair the shame of every former repulse, would blast the favourite plans of heaven, and seal the ruin of man; and, under these impressions, they made a most furious assault on the Captain of our salvation; but their temptations were repelled, and these hosts were driven back in terror and despair. "In the greatness of thine excellency, thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee," and the captives whom thou hast rescued shall declare thy mighty deeds. Let this victory animate you to a bold resistance to every temptation, and to unshaken confidence in your Saviour's aid.

Behold a reason for the exclamation of the Centurion in the blessings which the dying Saviour purchases. Peace with God, tranquillity of conscience, deliverance from the wrath to come, redemption from the power of the grave, grace here and glory hereafter, were obtained by his sufferings. And surely there must be infinite merit in these sufferings, which could procure such blessings for such multitudes. These blessings are the portion of your choice, and these are the pledges of redeeming love; with such blessings you must not repine at any misfortune which leaves you all untouched, nor envy the superior wealth and honour of worldly men, which are but passing shadows.

Behold another reason for this exclamation in the virtues of the sufferer. Think of his love, and you will feel that in enduring for the sake of his enemies, a death marked with all the anguish which men and devils, nay, incensed omnipotence could inflict, it was worthy of the heart of the Son of God. Never was there resignation like that, which, during such a season of suf-

fering, maintained entire acquiescence in the will of heaven. That mercy, which, amidst the sorrows of death blessed and saved others, proclaims him the Lord of all grace, and that faith which retained its trust in the God who had forsaken him, and resigned his spirit to him who had afflicted it with such grief, shows him to be its Author and Finisher. Jesus is the brightest pattern of the graces of religion, as well as the generous dispenser of its blessings. In his virtues there are no weaknesses to check our admiration, and no affectation to excite our disgust, but there is a purity and a splendour which show that the Spirit rested on him without measure, and that he is the express image of the invisible God. In imitation of your Saviour do good to them that injure you, minister, amidst your own griefs, to the comfort of your friends, keep from the scene of misfortune, the bed of sickness, and the house of mourning, every word, and look, and feeling, which savours of impatience and unkindness; and be strong in faith, for in proportion to its vigour will be your pious activity in life, and your triumph in death.

We feel impelled to this exclamation when we consider the moral wonders which the cross hath produced. In contemplating it as the instrument by which idolatry was overthrown, and the world vanquished, the cavils of the scribes silenced, and the sophistry of the schools confounded, persecution defeated in all its plans, and knowledge and virtue spread over the nations, we must acknowledge Christ crucified as the wisdom of God and the power of God. The cross hath many enemies yet to subdue, and vast regions to Christianize; but we doubt not its energy, and may every communion show your increasing experience of its sanctifying power, and every

year bring to us from distant regions new details of the wonders it hath wrought.

I call you, Christians, to honour the Son by the reverence of your hearts, the praises of your lips, and the obedience of your lives. His enemies are employing every art, and straining every nerve to render his name odious, and you must feel this as a powerful motive to increase your efforts in declaring his glory. Resist every opinion which detracts from the splendour of this title, and from our Lord's peculiar claim to it. When truth is misrepresented by some, and opposed by others, bear your testimony to it as the wisdom which comes from above, and when piety is reviled and trampled on, confess it as the fruit of the Spirit, and as the perfection of beauty.

Let us be solicitous that the views and the spirit of this Centurion may be diffused among our soldiers; and if the grace of God could make him a confessor of Jesus, let us not suppose that the profanity too common in armies is invincible. They want many of the advantages of instruction and worship which we enjoy; but the Spirit of God can employ a variety of incidents to strike them with seriousness, can persuade them to imitate the character, and to magnify the name of Jesus, and can "establish them in every good word and work." Let soldiers who are pious adorn their profession by sobriety, and kindness, and unremitting attention to their duty, and let them show by their courage in the day of danger, their patience under hardships, and their unshaken fidelity amidst every temptation to desertion and tumult, that the religious soldier is most worthy of trust.

Let your conduct be always such that those who see you will acknowledge that you are the children of God, and glorify your Father in you. And in your

decline, when the rays of light, few and feeble, the keepers of the house trembling, the loosening of the silver cord, the chillness of your blood, and the languor of your spirits, shall indicate that your connection with the world is dissolving, let the exercise of your faith, hope, and love, be such as will evince that you are heirs of heaven. Then, while survivors shall say as you have departed, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord," Jesus will acknowledge you as his in the other world, and present you to his Father as the children whom he hath given him, and whom he hath formed to righteousness.

ADDRESS XXVI.

JOHN XIX. 34.

"But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water."

THE bodies of the dead are generally treated with all suitable care and respect. Surviving friends linger by their side in pensive tenderness. With decent usages they are attired for the coffin, and prepared for the grave; and the place of their repose is guarded with watchful care. The most savage natures seldom do an indignity even to the corse of an enemy, and no injury which a man may have done to others during his life, is thought to justify the abuse of his remains by any human being.

How different was the case with the body of our Lord? Ere it was committed to the care of his friends,

one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and blood and water issued from the wound. This horrid outrage was committed by the soldier without any authority from his superiors, and was designed to gratify his own barbarous humour, or the malignity of the Jews; but the most important ends were accomplished by it under the direction of an overruling Providence. If what is called by the Evangelist "water," was the fluid which surrounds the heart, the certainty of our Lord's death is demonstrated; for, to a person alive, such a wound must have been fatal. On the fact of our Lord's death the salvation of man depends; for if the Messiah did not die, our guilt is yet unexpiated, the justice of God is still unappeased, and the penalty of the law is still to be endured. The death of Christ is the life of your hope, the price of your redemption, and the source of your courage in the prospect of dissolution. If it was water in the literal sense of the term, it was a miraculous testimony to the glory of the sufferer, and to the acceptance of his sacrifice, and was worthy of being recorded with all that solemnity and precision which mark the narrative of the Apostle John, and of being numbered with the prodigies which signalized the Saviour's death. It is remarkable that while John passes over in silence the external wonders which attended the crucifixion, he expatiates on this, and appears solicitous that his testimony to it should be credited. It was a display of power far more glorious than that which, in the days of old, brought water from the flinty rock, and points out the death of Christ as an abundant and perpetual source of spiritual blessings.

Meditate, Christians, on that which was represented by this stream of blood and water. It is the justifying merit and the sanctifying grace of the blessed Jesus, and you know that both are absolutely necessary.

Man was guilty, liable to the divine vengeance, and utterly unable to give satisfaction for the least of his offences. In vain shall men surround God's altar with floods of tears or with streams of blood, for it is not possible that these can take away sin. Of what avail are the criminal's professions of sorrow, or his offers of his most valuable possessions, to stop the procedure of public justice against him; and can we suppose that they will appease the wrath of the Judge of all? If repentance cannot bring back to the prodigal the health he has lost, and the money he has squandered in his excesses, it is foolish to imagine that it can regain the peace he has forfeited, and avert the doom he has incurred. But behold the Saviour dies, his blood is shed for remission of sins unto many, and all that trust in it have peace with God. Such is the efficacy of this atonement, that the most aggravated offences may be forgiven for its sake, and the most powerful of all motives to holiness are those which it suggests. Do your hopes of pardon rest on the sacrifice of Christ? I trust this is your answer, "I have fixed my confidence there, and I will never withdraw it."

But man also was polluted, his nature and life were depraved, and how shall this be removed? It is in vain to attempt it by palliating human depravity, or talking in swelling language of the dignity of our nature. The softening epithets applied to many vices prove only the low state of moral perception and feeling in those who employ them. The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God, its splendid donations, the parade of vain glory, and the exploits which it celebrates as the noblest display of courage and patriotism, are often the triumph of pride, cruelty, and revenge. It is the sanctifying grace of Christ which alone can renovate our nature, destroy its evil propen-

sities, and form in it those principles and affections in the exercise of which we become assimilated to the divine image, and rise to the destined perfection of our being. Have you, Christians, experienced this sanctifying grace? If this is the case you will be shocked at the criminality of many things which you once regarded with indifference, your moral feelings will be quick and powerful, your low attainments in virtue will fill you with grief and shame, and your object in attending on the Lord's Supper will be to derive new influence from his death, in the advancement of his glory, and in the fulfilment of his will.

After the Service.

Contemplate with suitable emotions the amazing scene before you. The heart of the dead Saviour is to you a fountain of life. That heart is now laid open, it is the last discovery which is made of it before it is committed to the tomb, and you see that it is full of grace and truth. Often had it melted, and sorrowed, and groaned for you, now it weeps and bleeds, and still it is for you. Let your minds be filled with wonder at his grace, who, having loved his own in the world, loved them to the end, and made even his breathless body to suggest to you the lessons and the blessings of grace and consolation. The cross of Christ was a tree of life, and its healing balm drops without ceasing.

Your indignation is glowing against this ruffian soldier: direct it against the evil passions of your own hearts. You have wounded Christ in the house of his friends, by your folly and carnality, and there are aggravations in your conduct which are not to be found in that of this man. You are conscious of Christ's

innocence and dignity, which he was not; you have received proofs of regard which he did not, and have given pledges of serving him which he never made. Let such thoughts humble you. Look to him whom you have pierced, and mourn for him. Say not, "I cannot look to him, for I am unable to bear the frown of anger and abhorrence with which he must survey a wretch like me;" but you forget that "he waits to be gracious, and takes pleasure in them that hope in his mercy." When we turn our eyes to one whom we have injured, we may find him implacable. There may be something in his face which tells us more decidedly than can be done by words, that he can never forgive us; but when the penitent soul looks to Jesus, there is a mildness and a pity in his countenance which assures us that all is forgiven, and that it is his glory and his delight to save us. O generous Redeemer, it shall be my delight to love thee and to serve thee, and my grief while I live that I have offended thee so often, and hated thee so long. There is no frown on his face, and on his lips no sentence of exclusion from his presence and mercy. It is less injurious to him to question his Almighty power, than to distrust the riches of his grace, or the tenderness of his compassion.

Implore clearer discoveries of the sufficiency and merit of the sacrifice of your Lord, and beseech him to give you a pledge that peace has been made by the blood of the cross, in his saying to you, "I am pacified to you for all that ye have done." O how delightful is it to hear the Father, whom we have offended, declaring himself reconciled to us, and the greatest and best of beings assuring us that he will be our God for ever! What a privilege is it to be thus warranted to hope that peace shall attend us in all the circum-

stances of our lot, to calm our minds in the storm of affliction, to sustain us in meek composure in our intercourse with unreasonable men, and to fortify us against the terrors of judgment?

Implore increasing measures of sanctifying grace, and beseech him to fulfil to you his gracious promise, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you," and arise from this solemn scene to carry into practice the virtuous resolutions which you have now formed. Let young disciples beware of every thing which tends to lessen the sensibility of conscience, or to taint purity of manners, and let them uniformly maintain the self-denial and the circumspection of prudence and sobriety. Let those in middle life take heed lest at any time their hearts are overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life; and let not the failing eye of age look back with favour on any of the pollutions of this world, or its declining days be made miserable by what is especially in them a foolish solicitude.

Trust in God, that whatever evil men may be permitted to do to you or to yours, it shall be made subservient to his glory, to your own good, and to that of others. The stroke which endangers your health, the calumny which blackens your name, the artifice which alienates your friends, and the injustice which wrests your property from you, shall yield to you and to others the peaceable fruits of righteousness, if you suffer like Christians. And, remembering what the body of your Lord was subject to in death and after it, fret not because yours must be wasted and broken by disease, and at last covered with worms and clods of dust. Let it be your desire that while it remains un-

buried, the sight of it may suggest to your family the vanity of every earthly confidence, and the necessity of immediate preparation for eternity, and that in its coffin, and in its grave, your flesh may rest in hope that this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and that what was sown in dishonour shall be raised in glory. Amen.

SERMON IV.

The Conference during the Transfiguration.

LUKE ix. 30, 31.

“ And behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias, who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.”

THOUGH the life of our Saviour on earth was a series of humiliation, there were some occasions in which he was declared to be the Son of God with power.— There were periods when the heart of the Man of Sorrows swelled with joy unspeakable, and when the approbation of his Father spread over him a celestial glory. Thus Christ was animated for severer conflicts, light is shed over his mysterious abasement, the heart that loves him is gladdened by such bright interruptions in the succession of his sorrows, and suffering excellence is encouraged to hope for the support of his favour, and for the honour of his testimony. The transfiguration of our Lord has always been considered as the most splendid occurrence in his life. In that scene the church on earth, and the church in heaven met in their representatives, to do honour to the common head and lord of both. Often hath pious meditation ascended the holy mount to contemplate this wondrous scene, and come down from it saying, “ We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” The pomp which was at that time displayed in courts, passed away as a vain shew, but

this incident lives in the hearts of the faithful, and its splendour shines for ever in the majesty on high.

The Evangelist tells us that the scene of the transfiguration was a mountain. So far removed was Jesus from the desire of vain glory, that while in his crucifixion he was put to open shame, his glory was displayed on a solitary mountain, and before three chosen friends. They were permitted to witness it, that they might give a sufficient attestation to its truth; and they only were allowed to behold it, in accordance with the unostentatious character of the whole transaction. This manifestation of his Father's complacency was promised to our Lord, and the time fixed for it was come, yet he solicits it by earnest and affectionate prayer, and while he prayed he was transfigured. We must not suppose, from the expressions here employed, that the glory was limited to our Lord's body. As his mental agony showed itself in his sweat of blood, so his mental rapture was apparent in the brightness of his countenance; and in addition to this, a splendour was spread over his body which irradiated not only his face but his garments. This was a pledge of the glory that awaited him at the right hand of God, and in which he was seen by John while he was in Patmos; who describes it in the loftiest terms which language could furnish, and tells us that while he sunk under his overpowering majesty, he spoke to him with a compassion and gentleness which shewed him that his love was unchanged.

While the Saviour was thus invested with heavenly splendour, Moses and Elias appeared in glory, and talked with him. The re-appearance of the dead in this world, forms a part of the vulgar belief in all ages. The arts of imposture, and the terrors of superstition, have influenced the fancies of some to such a degree, that they have imagined they saw the forms of the dead

before them, and heard from their lips various counsels and warnings. Independent of the circumstances which shew that such scenes are a delusion, the communications supposed to be made in them are either so trifling in themselves, or so limited in their object, that it cannot be believed by an enlightened mind that Jehovah would call the departed from their dread abode for such a purpose. Such a mind will never admit, that one would be despatched either from heaven or from hell, merely to excite idle terror, or to gratify vain curiosity. But how different is the case with the appearance of the two men mentioned in the text! The reality of their appearance is unquestionable, and the object of it was in all respects worthy of the wisdom and love of God. The persons who appeared on this occasion to do honour to our Lord were most illustrious, and the event about which they talked was the most important in the whole economy of Providence, and is the object of vivid interest and saving trust from age to age. We are this day to commemorate that event, respecting which Moses and Elias conversed with our Lord on the Mount, to whose glory they delight to devote all their powers, and to whose merit they refer all their bliss, and all their glory. May the Holy Ghost enlarge our views of this grand theme, and excite every pious affection to the highest degree which our present state admits, so that there may not be one heart that wanders from the cross of Christ, nor a feeling that flags in our homage of wonder and love.

In this discourse I shall first direct your attention to the account given of the persons who conversed with our Lord, and then to the subject of their conference.

I.—1. The persons who conversed with our Lord were two men. It may be thought that two angels would have rendered the scene more splendid, but there was a peculiar propriety in employing men. Angels

have not that relation to the Lord Jesus, nor that interest in his work which men have. He is our brother and Saviour, but not theirs. The death of Christ, about which they came to converse, is the study of angels, but it is the redemption of man. The sight of angels could not have yielded such encouragement as that of men. Angels in their splendour could inspire no hope of glory in the breast of guilty mortals, but men thus honoured, suggests the blessed idea that to it the children of the dust may aspire. Christ, associating with angels, could excite no hope of our intercourse with him in heaven ; but when he is seen conversing with glorified saints, the expectation is strengthened that we shall walk with him in white. Let us mark this as a high honour conferred on our nature, and let us not degrade that which he hath thus dignified, by taking it to the mountains of vanity, or the tents of sin.

2. They were men of high eminence under the former dispensation. Moses was highly venerated by the Jews on account of the sacrifices which he made for Israel, and the deliverance from bondage which he was raised up to accomplish, as the framer of their political and religious institutions, and as their guide through the wilderness to the promised land. Elijah was famous for his undaunted zeal against idolatry, and wickedness in high places, his eminent sanctity, his power with God, and his splendid translation to heaven. Now these two appeared to do homage to Jesus, as the head of that system of grace and truth of which they were the harbingers ; and as representatives of the law and the prophets, they came to resign their authority to him. Nothing could be better adapted to impress the disciples with the superior dignity of their Master, than his being thus attended by the most venerated characters of the former dispensation. They beheld Moses

putting his rod into his hands, and Elijah spreading over him his mantle, the harp of David devoted to his praise, and the Spirit of prophecy charged with his wonders.

The remarks which have now been made, were intended to point out the wisdom of Providence, in selecting only Moses and Elias from the multitude around the throne, for this service ; and it is a curiosity as unprofitable as it is presumptuous, which leads any to inquire into the claims which others had to be thus employed. The wisdom of the choice was apparent to all the saints in heaven ; and in that land of perfect light and love, there is no vanity that exults in peculiar distinction, and no envy to fret at the superior honours of another.

3. We are told that these visitants appeared in glory. They came from heaven, and though their honour and felicity there were very high, they felt no reluctance to descend to this mountain. They were not called to relinquish their splendour, or to cover it with a veil, as our Lord is said to have "emptied himself," when he appeared in our world. The glory which invested them must have been very great, since it was visible amidst the brightness spread around our Lord. The more splendid their appearance was, it was the more honourable to him to whom they did obeisance. It is a striking circumstance, that nought is said of the splendour of the heavenly messengers who ministered to our Lord in sorrow, while those who came to give him pledges of his glory, or to call him forth to it, are described as having countenances like lightning, and raiment white as snow. The lustre in which Moses and Elias appeared, was the glory of their exalted nature, and was heightened by the reflection of Christ's splendour. They appeared in human form, but it

was in that form, adorned with the lustre, and filled with the power of immortality. We know that the body of Elijah was translated to heaven, and though that of Moses was buried by God himself, it might be raised in glory at this season, and for this appearance. If this was the case, it would appear most encouraging to the Saviour's hope, that God would not leave his soul in a state of separation from the body, and that he would not suffer his Holy One to see corruption. Both are represented as conversing with the man Christ Jesus, and both were visible to the eyes of the disciples.

4. They talked with Jesus. It is not said that they talked with one another. They had come together to this scene, and though there was much in what they had seen and enjoyed, about which they might have "taken sweet counsel;" and though their sensibility to heavenly things was undiminished, it was with Jesus, and what concerned him, that their attention was occupied. Nor is it said that they talked with the disciples. They descended, not to hold intercourse with them, but with their master. Though they had for ages, enjoyed fellowship with him as God, this was, perhaps, the first time in which they were associated with him as a man. Long had their voices been employed in his praise, now they converse with him; and while the expression conveys the idea of familiar intercourse, it must have been marked on their part with reverence, affection, and delight. For this conference they were amply qualified, and they would retire from it with new ardour, in the resolution and wish, "My mouth shall speak the praises of the Lord, and let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever."

II. Let us now attend to the subject of their conference. It was the decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.

The term by which the death of our Lord is here represented, is very remarkable. It is not one commonly employed to express either death in general, or that of Jesus, but one which signifies departure. It has been supposed by some, that in this term there is an allusion to the ancient ceremony of the scape goat. On that goat the priest was to lay his hands, and to confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, putting them on the head of the goat, and to send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness.— This rite has been represented by the infidel scoffer, in his ignorance and audacity, as one of the ridiculous mummeries of a gross and childish superstition ; but it was an appointment of divine wisdom, and it directed the attention of the pious, for ages, to that eventful hour, when Jesus, that he might sanctify the people with his blood, suffered without the gates of Jerusalem. But this is a term which is applied to the children of Israel going forth from Egypt ; to it there is an allusion in the text, and betwixt it and the death of Jesus, it is easy to trace many striking points of resemblance. Then the Israelites quitted a scene of hard service, and aggravated misery, and when Jesus died, he closed a life embittered by toil, sorrow, and persecution, and exchanged the labours of a servant for the throne of glory. The departure of Israel was signalized by the destruction of their haughty and cruel oppressors, and they triumphed gloriously, where their enemies expected to have crushed them without mercy. And we know that in the death of Jesus he spoiled principalities and powers, destroyed death, and him that had the power of it, and made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them on the cross. But let it be carefully remembered, that whatever anxieties and fears the Israelites felt at this period, they were subjected to no

suffering ; whereas the departure of Jesus was marked by the most exquisite anguish, corporal and mental, by the torture of his body, and by the breaking of his heart.

With regard to this decease, the Evangelist tells us that Christ should accomplish it ; an expression which strongly points out the necessity of his death. It was necessary to fulfil the purposes of his Father, and his own engagements, and for the consummation of his work. Had he not died, all his previous labours, and victories, and sufferings, would have been unavailing as to the expiation of sin, or the subversion of Satan's kingdom. Had he not died, the excellencies of his life, however splendid, would have been, as to any efficacy on our salvation, only a bright show. But the obligation which our Lord was under to suffer and die, was the result of his own consent, and this consent was never either revoked or regretted. The verb rendered "accomplished" is active, and implies that in completing our salvation all the powers of his nature would be put forth. He knew every obstacle he would have to surmount, and every enemy that would oppose his progress ; that the sympathy of friendship would be denied him, and the smiles of his Father withheld from him during the dreadful scene, yet did he say "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished.

But the Evangelist specifies the place where this event should happen. Though the principal events of our Lord's life happened in places at some distance from Jerusalem, there were many reasons why he should die there. The impression which his sufferings were to produce on the spectators, the importance attached to his death, and the consequences to be deduced from it, in the propagation of his religion over

the world, required that it should take place, not in a solitary, but a public scene, that its certainty might appear indisputable. It was here that the council held its meetings by which he was to be condemned. It was in this place also that the sacrifices were offered up, and the rites performed by which it was pre-figured, and it was most fit that the decease should be accomplished here, in which they were all realized and superseded. I only add on this part of the subject, that as the murder of our Lord was to be the consummation of that course of wickedness which was to bring destruction on Judea, it was most fit that it should take place in the capital of the country, and at a time when the people were assembled in it from all corners of the land. At Jerusalem a cross was erected far more interesting than its splendid temple, and events took place on it, of which the most magnificent ceremonies that were ever performed within its walls were only shadows.

Having made these explanatory remarks on the language here employed, let us now consider the circumstances in the death of Christ about which they spoke. Here we are not left to mere conjecture, for, from the subsequent statements of the Evangelists, and Apostles, and from the accounts given us of the worship of the blessed in heaven, we learn some of the particulars of this conference.

1. They spake of the moral glory which Jesus should exhibit in his departure. Great was the glory of Moses in the going forth from Egypt. I refer not to the plagues which he inflicted, but to the boldness with which he braved the frowns and threats of power; his generous attachment to the cause of Israel, his unshaken faith amid the most perplexing circumstances, and his prompt obedience to the will of God, when his

orders led him to advance where safety could only be obtained by a miracle. But far superior to this was the glory shed round a crucified Saviour. I speak not of the power by which the heavens were clothed in blackness, the rocks were rent, and the dead were raised; but of that moral glory which is the veneration of the wise and the splendour of heaven, which time cannot deface, nor the dissolution of the world destroy.

The love of excellence was a principle of peculiar strength in the heart of Jesus, from the perfect purity of his nature, and his exquisite preception of its beauty. Every opportunity of exercising the graces of the Spirit in life he had gladly embraced, but a scene was before him in which they were to be manifested in a lustre more bright than ever. It was to this scene that Moses and Elias now led the views of the Holy One of God. They told him that on the cross he would exert a courage, by which the powers of darkness would be not merely resisted but trampled down, a faith which all the horrors of the curse could not shake, a patience which would remain mild and silent amidst unexampled agony, and a love to a lost world of sinners, which even they could not fathom with their improved faculties, and though they had studied it so long in the light of glory. Now nothing could be more animating to the heart of our Lord than this, and nothing better adapted to excite him to endure the cross, despising the shame, than the view of a conflict issuing in such a victory, and degradation gilded with such splendour.

2. They spoke of the important ends to be gained by his death. It reconciles the mind to labours and sufferings, when we are assured that valuable ends will be gained by them. There is an uncertainty which attends all human expectations, for un-

foreseen events may occasion disappointment, and subject us to the mortifying reflection, that we have laboured and suffered in vain. Yet, in spite of this uncertainty, hope stimulates to activity and patience. With regard to the ends to be gained by our Lord's death, there could be no risk of failure, and Moses and Elias would exhibit these to his mind in all their certainty and magnitude.

Let me specify some of these ends. They talked of the glory which should result from his death to all the divine perfections. The glory of his Father was the dearest of all objects to the heart of Christ; to attain it, he deemed no effort too arduous, and no suffering too severe; and to him Moses and Elias represented the justice of God honoured in the fulfilment of all its claims, and in exacting all its due, though his only Son was its victim; and his love displayed, in giving the Son of his bosom to suffer all that we deserved, and to purchase for us a higher felicity than was lost by the fall. It was the prospect of this glory to God in the highest, mingled with peace on earth, and good will to men, which called forth the praises of angels over the fields of Bethlehem, and it was this which occupied and animated the conference on the Mount.

The expiation to be made for sin was another end. Sin was most hateful to his pure heart, its malignant influence he saw in all its extent; and it was most delightful to him to think that the guilt which had spread disorder and desolation over the works of God, and plunged a world of intelligent beings in ruin, was now to be put away, even though this was to be done by the sacrifice of himself.

I must mention farther, the salvation to be gained by his death for millions of human beings. This

had, from eternity, been the great object to which his benevolent heart pointed ; and his generous solicitude to accomplish it was heightened by what he had seen of the criminality and wretchedness of men. He saw that by his death he would save the lost, and that the objects of his mercy would be exalted by it to eternal glory and bliss. They would share the splendour shed round these visitants, and the joy with which their hearts were swelling. To his generous heart this was a most cheering prospect, and made him welcome the death which should be for them the purchase of heaven.

3. We may consider them as speaking of the influence of his death. The hope that by any effort or loss of ours, the improvement and comfort of others will be promoted, will make a good man submit to it without a murmur. These men of God had felt the power of this consideration in their perils and conflicts, and this was an idea which gave a strong impulse to the mind of our Lord, that his dying love should be the animating principle of every virtue. Never was there an event to which morality owes so much, or which has such a cheering power over the ills of life, as the death of Jesus. It was gratifying to Moses and Elias to mark the influence of their labours, and every instance of their power which is made known to them, is to them a new pleasure ; but how little is all that has been accomplished by them, when compared with that event which hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified ! It has been employed by the wise and good in all ages, to give efficacy to every warning against sin, and to every moral exhortation ; and it is the grand means which the Holy Ghost uses in exciting and maintaining all the religious feelings in the heart. None can number the feuds it has extinguished,

the plans of mercy it has suggested, the charities it has prompted, and the mortifications to which it hath reconciled the heart. Who can tell how often it hath kindled the glow of devotion, and repressed the risings of pride, how many cottages of poverty it hath adorned with calm integrity, how many houses of mourning it hath filled with strong consolation, how many dungeons of misery it hath brightened, and how often it hath shed peace and hope over the bed of sickness and death? And this influence it hath not in one country, or period, but throughout all regions and all ages. Nay, they might present before him its influence in heaven, and tell him with what interest it was anticipated there, that it animated all its services, and heightened all its bliss, that there is not a song on high, of which it is not the grand theme, nor a spirit there which will not feel its power for ever.

4. They spoke of the rewards which should be conferred on him for his obedience to the death. They knew the glory which was its appointed reward, for they had seen the honours preparing for his name, and the throne and the sceptre which were destined for him. They could tell him, that though he should be loaded with a reproach, a name above every name would be his; that though he was to agonize in deadly sorrow, fulness of joy and pleasures everlasting awaited him at the right hand of God; that though an infuriated populace might reject and insult him, heaven would resound with blessings of gratitude and songs of praise, in honour of his worth and mercy; and that though men might doom him to a cross, and death might enclose him in the grave, the Spirit of holiness would raise him in triumph, and the Lord of all say to him, "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. They knew those circumstances in his

sufferings, the apprehension and the endurance of which would be most trying to his courage and patience, and they pointed out in the glory which was to follow what they deemed sufficient to counteract their influence.

In these statements, Jesus heard not the voice of flattery, or the language of hope, conjecturing a result favourable to its wishes, but the assurances of persons from the spot which was to be the scene of his reward, whose eyes had beheld the dazzling splendour of his crown, and whose ears had listened to the mandate of Jehovah requiring for him universal praise.

Let me now state shortly, some of the reasons why this theme was chosen for conference on the Mount.

1. It was done to animate and invigorate the Son of man for the scene before him. We have shown already how well these views of his death were adapted for this purpose; but it may be asked, was this necessary? To this it may be answered, that though they could suggest nothing as to his decease which his mind did not already know, yet the testimony of two such characters must have confirmed his hopes and anticipations; and the recollection of what they said would be useful to him in repelling the dark suggestions by which Satan attempted to discourage and distract him. Every man has felt, that while the fears of others increase his apprehensions, the confidence of others confirms his trust, and that his hopes are encouraged by their expectations.

But as the soul of Jesus increased in wisdom, it is not unreasonable to suppose that these heavenly messengers might enlarge his views of the results of his death, while they expatiated in all the light and power of celestial eloquence on this topic. Inspired by it, he goes forward in his momentous career, and perse-

vered till he had finished transgression, and brought in everlasting righteousness.

2. We may find another reason for the choice of this topic, in its peculiar importance. Men sometimes attach importance to events from their ignorance, and count things great and admirable which, to another, whose information is more extensive, appear quite trivial. But these glorified saints had the most ample opportunities of knowing the ways of God, and they could not err in pointing out redemption as the chief. In their own life and death they found nothing that had a claim to exclude it. They saw that the most splendid events under the old dispensation prepared its way, that in this centre all the lines of evangelical truth meet, and that on this foundation all the hopes of the redeemed rest. They had marked every feature of the divine character illustrated by it, and the blessings bestowed from the throne of grace, and the multitudes admitted into heaven on its account. They had seen all the angels of heaven engaged in the study of it, and at every step of their progress bursting forth in new expressions of wonder and praise. They knew that the events which were to take place under the Christian dispensation, even the grandest which prophecy foretells, or history records, the fall of empires, the subversion of systems of imposture, and the most valuable discoveries in art and science, would be directed for the extension of its influence; and that even judgment in all its solemnities, would be the acquittal of those who were justified by his blood, and the condemnation of those who were the enemies of the cross of Christ.

3. They talked of this subject for the sake of the disciples. They felt no jealousy on account of the office to which they had been chosen, and no envy

on account of the fame that awaited them ; but were solicitous that they might approve themselves the enlightened and zealous servants of such a Master, and that they might glory in his cross. We know not what part of this conference they did not hear, but it is plain that they heard somewhat of it, and that their eagerness to retain the company of Moses and Elias, arose not merely from what they saw, but from what fell from their lips. Such was the power of their carnal prejudices, that these views of Christ's death had not at first a due influence over them, but after they were enlightened by the Holy Ghost, they appeared to them most glorious and delightful. Who can tell what influence they had in deepening the repentance of Peter, and what support they gave to the heart of John while he stood by the cross ? We know that they were animated by them in the preaching of the gospel, and in suffering for its sake. It is pleasing to mark the interest which they felt in the conduct and labours of our Lord's apostles, and the idea is not to be despised as a vain fancy, that the blessed on high watch with earnest attention the progress of righteousness and truth in the world, and the struggles and triumphs of their friends.

4. They did it for the benefit of the Church in all ages. Thus we are taught to set the highest value on it, and to judge that if there was nought in glory which they would prefer to it as the subject of contemplation, we ought to suffer nought on earth to detach us from it ; and that to all the contempt cast on it by impious scorn, and to all the cavils urged against it by infidel sophistry, we may oppose the admiration which it excites in heaven, and the testimony borne to it by messengers from on high, who were incapable of uttering what was erroneous, or of admiring what was in-

significant. They did it to teach us how much of our discourse it should engross, and with what delight we should talk of it in our interviews with our friends. This theme would solemnize, improve, and bless social intercourse. By their conduct we are excited to the commemoration of it in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, and are encouraged to shew forth his death till he come. In this ordinance we feel an interest in the death of Christ, from the comfort which it yields to us in fear and sorrow, from the revival it imparts to our graces, and the repression it gives to our corruptions, which they cannot experience in the regions of perfect purity and bliss. We know the fellowship of his sufferings, and are blessed with the communion of his body and blood. And thus also, we are taught to bear about with us in the body, the dying of the Lord Jesus, to act under its influence, and to labour to promote it ; to feel its impulse in every duty, to listen to its admonitions in every scene, and to exhibit it as the most effectual means of renovating the worst characters, and of perfecting the best.

I shall conclude the discourse with some reflections and counsels, suggested by the subject.

How clear is the light which this subject sheds over the certainty, the employments, and the pleasures of a future state ? Blessed be God, we are not left to form our ideas of futurity from the wild and sensual fables of heathenism, nor from the deductions of reason, which are limited and unsatisfactory, but from the discoveries made by him with whom are the words of eternal life. In this scene we behold departed saints in the possession of all the powers of soul and body in a state of perfection, capable of every service, and blessed with their Saviour's joy. These are pledges of the glory of the

righteous, and in them you see what you shall be in due time. There you shall talk with Jesus, and address to his ear that anthem of your gratitude, "Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood," and his communications shall fill your minds with rapturous wonder. With such a hope we can brave the gloom of death, and the putrefaction of the grave, and may we live and die under its soothing and elevating influence.

This subject calls on you to cultivate religious conversation. But what is religious conversation? It lies not in disputes and controversies about doctrines and rites, in boasting of our spiritual attainments, in inveighing against the faults of others, in depreciating one preacher, and in exalting another, but in talking of the divine excellencies, the atoning death, the holy law, and the final judgment of our Lord. And when we behold such conversation thus sanctioned, we may despise the insolent impiety which calls it the cant of hypocrisy. Widely different it is from the prattle of the giddy, and the sallies of the jocose. It is not adapted, like them, to kill time, but to improve it. It keeps not eternity out of view, but prepares for it. When our conversation is reviewed, we shall blush that so little of it was occupied with this topic. I may remark that by the select nature of the conference on the Mount, you are taught to introduce it in proper places and seasons, and that such communications are better adapted to the family circle, and to the intercourse of friendship, than to the promiscuous assembly, or the house of mirth.

Let Christians live more under the influence of this death than ever. Die more to sin in an increasing abhorrence of it, in a more zealous opposition to every

evil in the world, and in the church, and in more active efforts to subdue every corrupt propensity. Live above the world, in contempt of its vanities and follies, in avoiding its pollutions, and in superiority to its frowns and persecutions. Let there be more of the forgiving spirit in which Christ died, in your dealings with your enemies, more of his patience in your bearing afflictions, more of his faith in your seasons of darkness, and more of his beneficence in your employment of what has been committed to your trust. Let it repress every desire of vain glory and self-indulgence in youth; let the active and the busy learn to make an interest in that salvation which Christ died to accomplish their great concern; and let the fainting heart lean on the cross of Jesus.

Let good men prepare for their departure. Imagine not that thoughts of dying suit only the scene of affliction and peril, for Jesus in his glory on the Mount had his mind turned to his decease. Think of it, ye who are now in the bright morn of youth. In the churchyard beside you, the worm is feeding on cheeks where health and hope lately glowed. Ye who are prosperous look down from the summit on which you stand, and you will see graves opening for you. And to all of you I say, "What good thou findest in thine hands to do, do it with all thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor wisdom, nor knowledge, in the grave, whither thou goest."

Finally, Let me call on the disciples of Jesus, with kindred feelings to those of Moses and Elias, to commemorate their Saviour's decease. Approach his table with strong impressions of the value of his death, with a glowing sense of his dying love, recognizing it as the only ground of your hope, and as the theme of

your study, and wonder, and praise, for eternity, surrendering your whole heart, and devoting the whole of life to its influence. On such communicants he will look with complacency, and to them he will say, "I died for you." We cannot come to that table in perfect holiness, as Moses and Elias descended to the Mount, for the body of death still cleaves to us; but we will go to it hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and saying, "O let not the Lord our God be angry, if we, who are but dust and ashes, take it upon us to speak to the Lord of glory." Let us come in that godly sorrow, which is in his sight a pleasing sacrifice; in that faith which is the evidence of things not seen; in that love which values one word of his lips, and one ray from his countenance, more than all the riches and pleasures of the world; and with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in his sight of great price; and may we see, O Jesus, thy power and thy glory as thy people have seen them in thy holy place.

Let those who never approach the Lord's table consider that, were their conduct general, the death of Christ might sink into oblivion on earth. What must spirits in glory think of your neglect? and what must they feel when they see the death of Christ undervalued in the world where he suffered, and by the creatures whom he died to save? Nay, it is a more striking idea still, what does Jesus himself think of your conduct? he is your final judge, and by him your disregard of his last injunction, and your insensibility to his dying love, shall be marked with abhorrence, and exposed in a way that shall cover you with confusion. By the guilt you incur by such neglect, by the benefits you lose, and by the punishment to which you expose

yourselves, I would urge you to wash your souls in his blood, to put away the evil of your doings, and to receive the grace of his Spirit, that you may be qualified for approaching his altar, and for shewing forth the wonders of his redeeming love.

ADDRESS XXVII.

The Death of Christ worthy of all honour.

THE Apostle John was blessed with a view of the homage paid in heaven to the exalted Saviour, which was admirably adapted to revive the interest and to unfold the import of the scene you have been contemplating. It is paid in the high praises of God, not by a select few, but by all the blessed; and not in the transport of a temporary excitement, but with a rapture and a vigour which shall not decay through eternity. "I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and of the living creatures, and the elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." There was not a spirit in glory that did not join in this tribute. It is a tribute which traces the virtue of the cross in all the splendours of the throne, and in it every faculty of praise is put forth to the highest. Never was a tribute so deserved, and, compared with it, the

acclamations of armies, and cities, and nations, are less than nothing and vanity. It is excelled only by the tribute paid him by the voice which proclaimed from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him."

You feel yourselves impelled to pay him your tribute, and are, I trust, now saying, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." And wherever you turn your attention you will find ample reason for this triumph in his death. It was the subject of the councils of Jehovah from everlasting, and eternity to come will be filled with its glorious results. If you look to heaven, you behold what it hath purchased; and if you turn your eye to the fire that shall never be quenched, you see from what it hath saved you. In the church you find the death of Christ the subject of its praise, the topic of its preaching, the theme of its conference, and the plea of all its prayers; and in your own hearts you feel that it is the source of your peace, and the basis of your hopes. By it the covenant of grace was sealed, and the law magnified. From this death your life springs, and before its power the darkest fears of guilt pass away. With your thoughts thus occupied, and your feelings thus excited, may you now partake of the symbols of his broken body and shed blood; and may you feel such an interest in his death, and such influence from it, as that you will be able to say, "I am crucified with Christ, he loved me, and he gave himself for me." All the glorified saints, were they present in this assembly, could not supply to us, O our Redeemer, the want of thy presence; and we desire to be enlightened, sanctified, and blessed, by the brightness of thy face, and by thy voice of wisdom and love.

After the Service.

The scene of communicating, like the conference on the Mount, is soon over, but its influence on you will, we hope, be permanent. Moses and Elias left the mount of transfiguration for heaven, you quit the communion table to mingle with the world, and to meet with difficulties and temptations, sorrows and death. But in the decease of your Lord you will find strength for difficulties, an answer to temptations, a balm for sorrow, a refuge in fears, and a hope for dissolution.

Let your gratitude to your Redeemer be more fervent and lively. When you are reminded by any circumstance of a great favour which you have received, and when some new mark of a benefactor's kindness is bestowed, you feel your hearts glowing with gratitude. You have now been reminded of that death by which you are saved, and have been satisfied with the goodness of your Lord's house; and will you not adore and bless him? It is possible to overrate a favour received from men, but who can value redemption as he ought? Improve this decease for strengthening pious affection, for increasing spiritual comfort, and for excitement to a holy practice. Never does Christ appear so amiable as in his dying love, nor sin so hateful as in his bruises and wounds. Never does holiness seem so excellent as in his obedience to death; and never is pain felt so easy, and affliction so light, as when we contemplate his agony. It will be a happy result of this service if it is evident to yourselves and others that you know, and love, and serve Jesus more.

Speak of this decease in your families, and let this

be the great argument by which you endeavour to gain the hearts of your children to the Redeemer, and the source to which you direct the members of your household for patience and comfort under all domestic trials. Speak of it when you visit the afflicted, and point out the resignation which it teaches, and the peace which it yields. Exhibit to those who are tempted to despair, the riches of its merit, and the efficacy of its power; and let this be the chief means which you employ to prepare and to fortify the dying for their departure. The gloom of death can only be brightened by the beam that shines from Calvary. And do not complain that you must quit any scene of ease or enjoyment for this service. Abasement for Jesus is honour, labour for him is pleasure, and loss for him is gain.

Anticipate your own departure, and be thankful for every monitor which reminds you that you must soon go home. Do not on objects which you are so soon to leave; fret not at difficulties which will soon be over; and complain not of burdens which you shall so soon lay down. Act as those who belong to another world, and let your conversation be in heaven. Rejoice in the friends, but above all, in the Saviour you have there. You shall soon behold his face in righteousness. Now you address him in praise and prayer, and your accents are low and feeble, and often do you attempt to lift your hearts to him in sighs and groans which cannot be uttered; but then you shall talk with him in the song of Moses and the Lamb, and in the kindest and sweetest intercourse of friendship read his heart, and lay open to him your own. When you quit this world, it will not be like Israel leaving Egypt for the wilderness, but like Christ departing for paradise; and the sentence with which you are now dismissed

from his table will be that with which he sends you away from earth, "Go in peace."

ADDRESS XXVIII.

JOHN XI. 35.

"Jesus wept."

WHAT a memorable circumstance in the history of our Lord! With great propriety have those who divided the New Testament into verses made a single verse of this, that the reader may pause and wonder at the tenderness of the Saviour's compassion. On this verse the mourner loves to meditate, many a tear has fallen over it, and many a blessing has been invoked on that head and heart from which these melting symptoms of pity came. This view of our Saviour's tenderness is well adapted to encourage his timid and sorrowful disciples to approach to him at his table, and to implore his mercy and grace; and it is in this ordinance that he delights to manifest the kindness and the power of his sympathy in healing the broken in heart, and in binding up their wounds.

These tears of Jesus proceeded from the genuine grief of a kind and melting heart. There are some who have tears at command, and who can weep bitterly when their hearts are very little affected; but, that Jesus was deeply moved, is evident from his groaning in spirit, and it was mental emotion that filled his eyes with tears. The heart which no danger could intimidate was feelingly alive to the impressions of pity; and though he experienced more than any one

ever did of that ungrateful and injurious treatment which has so often soured the generous and feeling breast, he beheld the miserable with unabated interest, and relieved them with undiminished liberality.

These tears were copious. This is plain from the remark which was made by some of the spectators, "Behold how he loved him." They saw in his tears an attachment to the dead uncommonly tender, and therefore it could not be a slight or feeble expression of sorrow. Joy shed few gleams over his countenance, and the Man of Sorrows was to be known by the tokens of grief. At the same time we must not suppose that there was aught that was excessive, or any indication of outrageous passion in our Lord's sorrow. It unfit him for no part of his duty; the heart that is throbbing with strong emotion is possessed in patience, and while his eyes run down with water, he waits for the salvation of God.

In this sorrow of our Lord there was no ostentation. Nothing is more disgusting than parade in grief; but it must be remarked, that, to assume and to maintain the appearance of unconcern in the scene of mourning, may be hurtful and offensive to those whom our sympathy might sooth, is an indignity to the memory of the departed, and a contempt of those lessons of mortality which both wisdom and piety require that we should feel. It was necessary that our Lord's grief should be manifested for the comfort of the mourners, and for the trial of the hearts of the spectators; but beyond this he had no wish to exhibit his sorrow. The affectation and vain glory which court applause for any quality whatever, were utter strangers to his meek and lowly mind.

How amiable was Jesus in this sorrow! Philosophy delights to exhibit its sages, and war its heroes, as supe

rior to all the softer passions, and stern and unmoved amidst the agitation of others ; but the Gospel represents him who is the wisdom of God, and the power of God, as possessing all the gentler dispositions, and as bearing to the scene of sorrow a kind and melting heart. Such a character deserves to be loved in the highest degree, and the more it is studied the more amiable it appears.

But let your meditations be turned to the causes of these tears. He wept from friendship to Lazarus. The various and endearing expressions of this man's regard crowded on his mind, and could not but deeply affect so grateful a heart. He thought of the agony through which Lazarus had passed, and of the pangs he had felt at not seeing him ere he died. Such thoughts as these might pass through the mind of Lazarus in his illness : " If Christ were here he would relieve me if it was for my good, and with him by my side, I could die in peace. My beloved sisters, it is his hand which I wish to close these eyes, and to his care I desire to commend you in my last hour." But Lazarus dies while the Comforter is far away ; and Jesus felt that the face which used to meet him with smiles was now pale and ghastly, that dark and dismal was the mansion where friendship spread his couch and prepared his table, and that the companion who leaned on his bosom now lay cold and senseless in his tomb.

Our Lord might weep also when he thought of the scenes to which he was to return. His resurrection would be a blessing to his sisters, but it would bring him back to a world of sorrow and danger, where the malice of his enemies would seek to destroy him, and where he must be subjected to many anxieties and fears. He knew that he had again to pass through

ruins of that nature which he had assumed, and to which, amidst all its degradation, his soul cleaved, and over the perdition of those who would not come to him that they might have life.

And now, my brethren, let me ask, into what frame of mind have these contemplations brought you? Are your hearts melting, and your tears mingling with his; and are you now following him from the grave where he wept, that you might be soothed by his sympathy; to the cross where he died, that you might be washed in his blood; that you may know him in the virtues of his character, and in the fellowship of his sufferings? Then over you the Saviour will rejoice, and his comforts will delight your souls.

After the Service.

Christians, you feel, I trust, the claims which the Saviour in tears has to your admiration and love. Our hearts esteem the man whom we behold weeping with the mourner, especially if we know him to be one of a great and beneficent character; and shall we not regard him with every sentiment of wonder and affection, who, though he was in the form of God, entered so deeply into the woes of suffering humanity? Tenderness of heart is always amiable, but it appears especially so in one whose situation is superior to that of the sufferer, or who has severer woes of his own to bear. And when the Lord from heaven, when the victim of the curse weeps for us, we must feel disposed to say, "How precious is thy grace! I am ashamed of the coldness of my love, nor can I think of the selfish spirit of the world, or of the enmity of the carnal mind."

against thee without indignation. Here is a heart that would love thee in the highest degree, and which thy tears and thy sufferings have won." Thy heart is accepted ; but while his condescension should fill thee with grateful wonder, remember the solemn responsibility under which this surrender has brought thee. The heart, thus devoted, can never be withdrawn from him without involving thee in the guilt of the basest treachery. O keep it " with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life or of death."

Trust in your Saviour's compassion in the hour of sorrow. You cannot accost him in the same form, nor receive his sympathy in the same way with the friends of Lazarus ; but we know that in all our affliction he is afflicted. Let not the assurance of his sympathy be treated as a vain delusion. It is no idle tale which I hear from the lips of that orphan, " I went to weep at my father's grave, and I looked for some to pity me, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none. All was motionless around me save the waving of the grass, and all was silence save the howling of the wind. No father's voice spoke to me from the dust ; but I heard a voice, and by its kindness and its power I knew it to be that of Jesus. It promised me the pity, the love, and the care of an Almighty Friend ; it inspired me with fortitude, and animated me with hope. I felt his arm supporting me, I sunk into his bosom, and he soothed my heart to rest."

Cultivate sympathy, and be ready to manifest it to the children of sorrow. It is painful to think how little of the Saviour's spirit is to be seen among the visitants of the house of mourning. The bereaved parents, the helpless orphan, and the broken-hearted widow, have too often been surrounded by those who had nought of sorrow but its garb, and have listened in vain

for one sentiment of piety, or one counsel of religious comfort. Foolish talk and political details too often occupy the place which should be devoted to the words of eternal life. Let us do every thing in our power to correct such flagrant improprieties, and labour to support the weak, and to comfort the wounded mind. How soothing to the sufferer is the language and the manner which says, "I cannot remove your pains, but I will make them as easy as I can by the ministrations of love. I cannot bring back the friends you have lost, but I will be a friend in their place." Were the spirit of sympathy prevalent in a church, it would resemble the sensitive plant, every twig of which vibrates if a leaf is touched; or the natural body, where all the members suffer if one is injured. Sympathy with others will prevent your brooding too painfully over your own troubles; and to you it must be the most powerful of all motives to this duty, that he who hath taught you contentment by his privations, zeal by his labours, and devotion by his prayers, hath called you to weep with the mourner by his tears.

What a happy day to your Lord will that of the resurrection be! Then the friends whom he gave up to death with a sigh will rise to die no more, and those with whom he wept will be more happy than ever they were sad. Then the bodies of good men will appear more comely than our nature did even in the period of innocence, and the crown of life shall be placed on the head which once lay so low in the dust. They shall be engaged in the noblest services, and called to the best enjoyments.

How delightful to Jesus will be the astonishment and rapture with which pious friends will meet each other, and the pleasure with which they will listen to his assurance from his throne, that their union shall be eter-

nal ! In the very spot where friends parted they shall meet again in joy more sweet than the sorrow was bitter, and the place of weeping shall be the scene of exultation. Let your decaying hopes feel the reviving influence of your Lord's promise ; and while nature mourns over the disorder and the desolation which are spread over the fairest of her works, rejoice in hope of the new heavens and the new earth, where righteousness, harmony, and love, shall flourish for ever.

ADDRESS XXIX.

LUKE XIX. 41, 42.

“ And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace, but now are they hid from thine eyes.”

MANY are the bright examples of patriotism which are exhibited in the history of nations. The warrior who has secured the liberty, or extended the power of his country by his skill and valour ; the legislator, who has established its rights, and promoted its prosperity, by his wise regulations ; and the beneficent, who have founded institutions for the relief of the helpless and the wretched among its inhabitants, are remembered with lively gratitude from age to age. That they lived, not to themselves, but to their country, is the tribute paid to their name when they die, and it is preserved with care as a sacred memorial of national gratitude, and as an animating motive to others to de-

vote their talents and labours to the general good. Some have made great exertions for the public welfare amidst ungrateful and injurious treatment from their country, and on this account are extolled with loftier praise.

But how much superior was the display of patriotism made by our Lord when he wept over Jerusalem, and uttered, in the most pathetic language, the bitter regret of his compassionate heart. The services which he had rendered to the Jews, were far beyond all ever derived from mortals; his motives in these were of the purest and noblest description, and they were performed in circumstances which would have roused the meekest to anger, and hurried on the most forgiving to revenge; yet did he mourn over the lost sheep of the house of Israel, who had rejected all the offers of his grace.

The heart loves to meditate on those scenes in our Lord's life in which he appears in the tenderness of his mercy. Had we merely seen him scattering the treasures of wisdom, or exercising a controul over the elements, we should have regarded him with admiration; but we would have wished for some direct indications of the compassion of his heart. While power may astonish, and majesty may awe, it is goodness which encourages, and generosity that wins. To a creature conscious of guilt, and oppressed with sorrow, the mercy of Jesus is the most interesting of all his excellencies; and it is to the tenderness of his heart that we look in all the sad and trying incidents in our lot. Men may err as to the objects, the expression, and the degree of their compassion, but the pity of Jesus was guided by perfect wisdom; and while it sheds the sweetest grace over his own character, it most powerfully calls forth all those forms of charity

in every age, which are so lovely and so useful amidst the evils of this mortal state.

The scene you are now contemplating presents the second instance which is recorded of our Lord's weeping, and it gives us a higher view of his character than the first. To weep for the sorrows of an enemy is a superior degree of generosity to that which weeps over those of a friend. To mourn in sympathy is so common, that he who refuses to mingle his tears with sorrowing connections is thought of with surprise and aversion; but to weep for the calamity of a foe is so rare, that when we behold Jesus thus affected, we are constrained to say, "Is this the manner of men, O Lord God!"

How interesting is the spot to which pious meditation is now leading you! On it every Christian traveller has paused, and indulged the tender reflections which it awakens. Writers of taste and genius have referred to this scene as a most beautiful example of moral greatness in character, and genuine pathos in description; often have the ministers of religion pointed to it to give effect to their calls to repentance and mercy, and many have blessed the hour when their views were led to it, and have marked it as the time when they first felt the grace of Jesus. It is my earnest wish that while your attention is fixed on it, you may be powerfully impressed with the generosity of our Lord's character, that you may experience the kindness of his love, that you may put on, as "the elect of God, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, and long suffering," and in your final salvation and perfect likeness to himself, may Jesus for ever triumph.

The heart of Jesus was at this time melted by the prospect of the impending ruin of Jerusalem, and there

are various circumstances which render this compassion in a peculiar degree wonderful. He was now advancing with unusual glory to Jerusalem, and was surrounded by the multitude, shouting for joy. In the scene of triumph, the man whom the people delight to honour, testifies by his looks the gratification which he feels, and it is evident that he considers it as the proudest day of his life; but in this joyous procession Jesus weeps. In the brightest seasons of his life he still appears as the Man of Sorrows. He knew that these transports of the people would soon be succeeded by very opposite feelings; and he would have preferred the pious homage of one devout heart to all the acclamations of the world, and to all the glory of its kingdoms.

The Jews had been frequently and solemnly warned of the misery which was coming upon them, but they despised every admonition; they killed the prophets, and stoned those who were sent to them. In such circumstances, others would have said that they were about to receive the due reward of their deeds, and that they deserved no pity, for they hardened their necks, and refused to return; but Jesus mourns over the fatal delusion which made them refuse his counsel; "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways, I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries!" Their contempt of his warnings was afflicting to the Saviour, as defeating his generous efforts, and as an aggravation of their guilt and doom.

Our Lord was soon to suffer, and had before his eyes all the horrors of his agony, and all the anguish of his crucifixion, and yet he sheds no tear for himself. Many are so engrossed by their own woes that they cannot bestow a thought upon the sorrows of others, and in the prospect of any severe calamity, they can-

not turn away their eye from the quarter from which the blow is to come which is to lay their hopes and comforts in the dust, but Jesus looks beyond his cross and his grave, to the utter desolation of the holy city; nay, when he was led out to suffer, he said to the compassionate women who were bewailing his fate, "weep not for me, but weep for yourselves."

I may add, that the people over whom he mourns, were in a few hours to reject him with one accord, to demand his crucifixion, and to put him to a cruel and ignominious death; yet, instead of wishing that God would avenge him on his murderers, he weeps over their delusion, and prays that they might be forgiven.

There are some places of Scripture in which we meet with displays of generous feeling which bear some resemblance to this. When Abraham looked to Sodom, and heard Jehovah's purpose to destroy it, he poured out his soul in importunate intercession for its preservation, and six times did he present the only plea which he could suggest for mercy. How wonderful is the condescension of Jehovah, and how amiable is the earnestness of the patriarch in that scene! But he had no indignity nor persecution before him in that place by which his generous ardour was tried, and over which it triumphed. When David left Jerusalem, he went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, with his feet covered, and his head bare. Among these tears there might be some of pity, for the miseries which civil war was preparing for his capitol and country; but they were chiefly tears of regret for the comforts which he had been forced to leave, and of anguish that his darling son had acted as a rebel and a traitor. But the tears of our Lord were those of pure benevolence and commiseration.

Christians, I trust that the view you have taken of

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the amazing compassion of the Lord Jesus, has increased your admiration of his mercy, and strengthened your trust in the riches of his grace. And when you advance to his cross, and see that he who wept for his enemies, laid down his life for them, you will feel that his love is incomparable. It shall be told, O merciful Redeemer, to the honour of thy grace, from age to age, and as the most powerful motive to persuade to the forgiveness of injuries, that thy tears were shed for those who were to insult thy sufferings, and that thy blood was poured forth for the salvation of those who in heart and conduct were enemies to God.

After the Service.

I call on you, Christians, to be grateful to the Saviour, for his mercy to you. His grace was exceedingly abundant to you, in wisdom and faith. Had you died in your state of blindness and delusion, you must have been lost without remedy; but he brought you out of darkness into his marvellous light. He shewed you the path of life, justified you by his grace, and made you heirs of glory. Study with more diligence than ever the things which belong to your eternal peace. If nought in the world can damp the ardour of scientific inquiry, shall your desire for heavenly wisdom wax cold? The more extensive this knowledge is, the more holy and happy will it render you. While your faculties are vigorous, and your opportunities ample, follow after wisdom, and let there not be reason, amidst the confinement and the decays of age, for sad reflection on your indolence and folly. Jesus will mark with delight your spiritual attainments. He hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servants; views with benevolent satisfaction the happ

ness you feel in communion with him at his table ; and it is the day of the gladness of his heart, in which he fills his disciples with the graces of his spirit, and with the joys of his salvation. He surveys with delight every step you take in the way to heaven, and his joy will be full when he presents you faultless before the presence of his glory, and when no remaining infirmity, and no decline in piety, shall ever mar his complacency in you. “ He will rest in his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.”

How astonishing is it, that the Lord Jesus in his glory still looks on perishing sinners with compassion ! His glory now is very different from that short-lived triumph which marked his entrance into Jerusalem, which was so soon succeeded by the hour of darkness, and which so quickly led him to the scene of blood. He is at the right hand of the Majesty on high, yet even there, amidst all the gladness which arises from the countenance of his Father, and from the happiness of his redeemed, his heart melts in pity for the victims of Satan ; and by the methods which he employs for their salvation, he shows that he hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked. When he surveys the fulness of joy prepared for his people, and to which his grace hath brought so many of them, and when he thinks on those who scorn all the offers of this happiness, and by obstinacy in sin are fitting themselves for destruction, he may be viewed as saying, “ Oh that there were such an heart in them that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever.”

In the spirit of your Lord, take a lively interest in the welfare of your country. Some, under the influence of a spurious philosophy, reprobate all such attachments as inconsistent with general benevolence.

But though the name of patriotism hath often been abused, to encourage envy and dislike, injustice and cruelty to other nations ; and though we are bound to love all whom God has made of the same blood with ourselves, a peculiar attachment is due to the land of our fathers' sepulchres, to a people with whom we are connected by so many interesting associations, and to scenes so rich in the memorials of the care of Providence.

Others, under the influence of malignant discontent, sicken at their country's glory, rejoice in its calamities, and are eager to depreciate its institutions. And what hath their country done to them, to incite them to such conduct? Were it true that it had treated them with unkindness, it would still be their duty to pray for its welfare, and to deprecate its ruin. Show your attachment to your country by the zealous support of law, of order, and of the public peace ; by your readiness to make every sacrifice which may be required to alleviate any general calamity, and by labouring to promote that Christian knowledge, principle and virtue, which can alone insure the stability and the happiness of nations.

Regard not the calamities of your enemies with delight, but with a sincere, tender, and active compassion. If the heart that hated you is bleeding with sorrow, you will act like your Lord in binding it up, and you will find a pleasure in this effort of mercy which revenge never gave. When you see those who have injured you hurrying to destruction, instead of pleasing yourselves with the thought that Providence will thus avenge you, labour to arrest their progress, and show that you are solicitous for their amendment, and not for their ruin.

Say not of the wicked, that they do not deserve your

commiseration. Human creatures abusing such powers as God has bestowed on them to his dishonour, and to their own misery, are objects which claim our strongest compassion. Ah, how few tears are shed over their present infatuation, and their approaching ruin! It is strange that it should have been deemed by any a mark of superior orthodoxy, and of eminent sanctity, to address to them no call of mercy, and to leave them to perish without an effort to save them. Instruct them in meekness and patience, beseech them in the bowels of Jesus Christ, and warn them with tears to flee from the wrath to come. You may thus gain them to wisdom, and if you succeed, your triumph will be blissful, and if you do not, you shall in nowise lose your reward. Such opportunities of pious utility will soon be at an end. Their next trespass may provoke God to seal their doom, and though he should still wait to be gracious, the time is short; life is but a day; sweet is its morn, and bright its noon, but the shadows of the evening will soon be stretched out, and the night comes in which no man can work. What anguish will you feel when you hear of the death of a transgressor, if he has departed without warning from you! It is an act of benevolence to them, and of fidelity to your Master, to exhort them to apply their hearts to wisdom, and to beseech them not to receive the grace of God in vain; and this will animate and cheer your own efforts in the study and the practice of that true religion which is the light of life, and the whole of man.

You will depart, I trust, from this scene, with feelings of compassion for the Jews, who are groaning under the misery, in the anticipation of which our Lord wept, and disposed to support the plans of those who in wisdom and mercy are labouring to turn away unbelief from Israel. Of all the pious charities of the

age, this will not be the least acceptable to the Saviour. How great will be his delight when he shall see their eyes opening to the knowledge of the gospel, and their hearts glowing with Christian love ! and if his Spirit animates you, that joy shall be yours.

ADDRESS XXX.

HEB. V. 7.

“ Who, in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard, in that he feared.”

Our Lord's days on earth were characterized by devotion. His miracles were preceded, his sermons were followed, his labours were lightened, and his sufferings were soothed by prayer. But there were some occasions in which he poured out his soul to God with peculiar earnestness. This was the case in his agony, and to that scene the Apostle here refers.

In that scene our Lord offered up prayers and supplications. The word rendered prayers signifies deprecations of evil ; and the term suppliant is applied to those who fall down at the feet of the persons they address, and take hold of their knees while they beseech them to be favourable to them.

Our Lord's prayers were offered at this memorable

period with strong crying and tears. When Jesus was brought before men, and suffered from their hands, he was silent; but when God entered into judgment with him, his cries were vehement; and though they were heard by no human ear, they rose before the throne of the Highest. The expression intimates earnest desire, and urgent entreaty.

The Evangelists do not mention the tears which our Lord shed in his agony; but this affecting circumstance the Apostle has recorded, as he noted a memorable saying of Christ's, which is not to be found in any of the Gospels, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." This is the third and last instance of his weeping recorded in Scripture, and his tears at this time were tears of agony, flowing from a breaking heart. No torture which men could inflict could make him thus weep and cry. He wept and cried under the pressure of his Father's rod, to save you from the place of weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, and to procure for the children of sorrow that best of all consolations, "God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes."

These cries our Lord addressed to him that was able to save him from death. He now felt the power of God in punishing; yet while the thunders of that power were roaring around him, he thinks of its strength to save. He believed that the power of his Father could embolden him against the mightiest host, support him under the weightiest burden, and raise him from the lowest degradation.

But what did your Lord solicit in these prayers, and how was he heard? He prayed that if it was possible the cup might pass from him. This cup contained all the anguish of a violent death, and all the curses of the broken law; it was put into his hands as the

sinner's substitute, and he was called on to wring out the dregs of it and drink them. From a task so dreadful, his innocent human nature seemed to shrink. Human nature ever recoils from pain and suffering, and can only be brought to welcome it by a superior influence. If it had been otherwise with him, it has been remarked, he could not have been said to have suffered, for nothing is suffering, or can be penal to us, but what is grievous to nature. This prayer indicated, not the sinking of his fortitude, or the decay of his love, but the extremity of his anguish, and the truth of his humanity.

And how was he heard in this prayer? It was not a prayer totally declining suffering. "Thinkest thou," said he to Peter, when he reprov'd the rashness which led him to draw the sword in his defence, "that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he would presently give me more than twelve legions of angels, but how then shall the Scripture be fulfilled, that thus it must be." But as this prayer was an expression of the horror of nature at the idea of suffering, it was answered in his heart's being fortified against its terrors, and in that being rendered welcome which was the object of aversion. So immediate and complete was the answer, that with the next breath he adds, "nevertheless, not my will but thine be done."

Ye are now reflecting on what must have been your fate had this cup passed from your Lord, and that thought will increase your gratitude to him who saved you by a method so agonizing to himself, and whose love to you was stronger than death.

Christ also deprecated the sinking of his human nature in the conflict. He saw that he had to contend with an infuriated populace, with crafty and

violent priests, and with the powers of darkness, irritated to the utmost by their past defeats, and determined to put forth all their strength to destroy him. But he had to bear also the fury of incensed Omnipotence. Affected with the tremendous prospect, and knowing the consequences of failure to his own glory, and to the salvation of men, he cried, "Save me, O God, for the waters are come into my soul." Hold up these hands till I have dashed thine enemies in pieces; sustain this heart till I have made peace betwixt God and man, and let my blood flow till sin is washed away.

He was answered in this prayer, for there appeared an angel from heaven to strengthen him. That angel came to dry up his tears, to brighten his prospects, and to invigorate his heart. Instead of sinking in the struggle, he was more than a conqueror; and our nature appears with a glory which shall be sought for in vain in the courage of the hero, or the fortitude of the martyr. And shall not you raise the voice of rejoicing and salvation? "The right hand of the Lord is exalted, the right hand of the Lord doth valiantly."

But our Saviour deprecated also, continuance under the power of death. It has been remarked, that the phrase to save from death signifies either preservation from an evil of which a man is in danger, or deliverance from one into which he has fallen. The idea of continuing under the power of death is horrible to nature. That the grave shall be our perpetual abode, and corruption and dust the end of man, are fears which have harassed human beings in all ages; and perhaps such thoughts as these might be thrown into our Lord's mind by the tempter; "From the weight which crushes thee to the dust of death, what hand shall relieve thee? To rot with criminals may be thy

fate as well as to die with them, and the scoff uttered at thy cross may be repeated by those who pass by thy grave, "He saved others, himself he cannot save." In opposition to such suggestions, Jesus lifted up his voice to him who quickens the dead, and calls the things which be not, as though they were. And rejoice that he was heard in this prayer. He was assured of being taken from prison and from judgment, and of being raised to a life not clouded by infirmity and suffering as before, but uniformly glorious and blissful; a life to be spent in the enjoyment of his well-earned triumphs, and in the benevolent application of the promised salvation.

The apostle remarks, that he was heard in that he feared. Reverence for God's majesty and justice, submission to his will, and zeal for his glory, were the principles which dictated and guided our Lord's prayers, and rendered them the delight of his Father.

Christians, you have been listening to your Lord's prayers; and if ye are not dead to the eloquence of devotion in its most melting form, your hearts must be strongly impressed. You have reason to be ashamed that they are not more affected. When you hear the shriek of woe your heart shudders, and, in the place of weeping, the tear starts into your eyes; and can any of you see the Saviour's tears, and hear his cries unmoved? These cries and tears were expressions of anguish which you deserved to suffer. He utters these strong cries, because he bears your griefs; and his face is wet with tears, because he carries your sorrows. Let gratitude, repentance, and love, unite their influence in your hearts, in offering to him a suitable sacrifice at his table, that in receiving it he may see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied.

After the Service.

WHEN Hezekiah received the message from God by the prophet, "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live," he turned his face to the wall, and prayed to the Lord, and wept sore. The approach of death has made the mighty cowards, and watered the bed of state with tears. Eminent as he was for piety, he shuddered at the thought of death. But the prospect which made your Redeemer offer up strong crying with tears was much more dismal than his. To Hezekiah death was to come in the form of disease, as the common lot of mortals, as the instrument of happiness, and amid all the alleviations which power or wealth could impart; but to Jesus it came loaded with all the vengeance of the curse, and amidst the agony and shame of the cross. Hezekiah's prayer was answered in the addition of fifteen years to his life, and that of our Lord in length of days for ever and ever. You have seen him crushed by anguish, behold him now in paradise, the region of delight; on the throne, the seat of empire; and in his Father's bosom, the place of infinite tenderness and everlasting rest. He remembers every circumstance in the scene of sorrow, and that heightens his enjoyment. Eternity opens before him a boundless prospect of glory and felicity.

There are some at the communion table to whom Jesus is now saying, "Why weepest thou?" When the king of Persia said to Nehemiah, "Why is thy countenance sad?" he was sore afraid. Haughty and unfeeling despotism deems the face of sorrow a reproach to its power; but Jesus asks the cause of your tears that he may remove it. You say that it is conscious guilt

that troubles you, but if you have been washing his feet with your tears, to you he saith, "Thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace." Let those who are happy in their Saviour maintain a holy caution. Beware of forming too flattering expectations of human life. From the mount of communion you behold all around you bright with sunshine, but the clouds will return. Afflictions will try your patience, and temptations your faith. Disappointments will try your spirituality of mind, and desertion your hope in God, and I call on you to prepare for these. Our Lord's days on earth were not days of ease and indulgence, and can you expect yours to be so?

Pray without ceasing, and pray as Jesus did. Think how Jacob wept, and made supplication at Bethel, and how as a prince he had power with God, and prevailed. Let yours be the effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous man, which availeth much. Guard against every thing which may deprive you of the seasons, or indispose you for the duty of prayer. And despair not of an answer to prayer, for "in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not." You have an advocate with the Father, who will enforce your petitions, and if his prayers were prevalent on earth, they cannot fail in heaven. This is the character which God gives his people, "my suppliants;" and beware lest, by your neglect of prayer, or your carelessness in it, you forfeit your claim to this appellation.

Rejoice that in the heavenly state Jesus "still remembers his tears, his agonies, and cries," and though no friend on earth should remain to join his voice with your prayer, or to mingle his tears with yours, you can look up to one in heaven who is touched with the feeling of your infirmities, and "who suffered, being

tempted, that he might know how to succour them that are tempted." He delights to wipe the streaming eye, and to still the quaking heart. Confide in him in the worst season. In the midnight hour consider that God dwells in the thick darkness, and in the wildest tumults of the storm, that his way is in the whirlwind, and that he sits on the floods. And shew that the scenes of sorrow through which you have passed have taught you promptitude in mercy. You have been in the house of mourning, let the widow see that you know her heart, and the orphan that his loss is yours. Have you had affliction on your bodies, or temptations in your souls, let the sick and the tempted have as much as possible of your care. In studying the sympathy of our Lord, you must labour not only to catch its tones of tenderness, and its looks of pity, but to imitate its gifts and deeds of mercy.

Live in the fear of God. Did Jesus fear, and shall we have none? The frivolous and the giddy see nothing attracting in this principle. They say there can be no beauty in the sadness of the countenance, and no pleasure in the tremour of the heart; but it gives to the manner all the grace of modesty, and to the soul a calm and solid satisfaction. Its aspect is grave, and when it looks on folly it is with a frown, but its heart is true. Fear in Jesus was not attended with the misgivings of unbelief and of conscious guilt: though he took on him the form of a servant, he had not the spirit of a slave; and the temper of a son was apparent in all the tasks which he performed, and in all the sufferings which he bore. Cultivate this filial fear, and in religious worship it will keep you from levity and formality, in your recreations from folly and excess, and in the business of the world from every fraud. In com-

pany it will preserve you from that fear of man which suffers profanity to go on unchecked, and from that frivolity which will degrade your profession. In adversity it will render you still, and in prosperity it will make you dependent on God, and humble to man.

Beware of forming harsh conclusions about the piety of those who are afraid of death. It is not every saint who can defy the last enemy. When death stands by thy bed-side, lays his cold hand on thine, and orders thee to come away, thou wilt then find what a serious thing it is to die. But cry to God, and from his throne strength will come to the bed of languishing, and a ray shall descend on the dark vale. He will remove, or at least mitigate your terrors. You are saved from sin, from the world, and from hell already, and to this list of deliverances salvation from death shall be added. Take heed lest by folly, or negligence, or any criminal act, you call up remorse to aggravate the horrors of the last hour. Give all diligence, by the constant exercise of every Christian grace, to make your calling and your election sure, and "so there shall be administered to you an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Then you will have no calamity to weep over, no evil to dread, and no want to be supplied. The sentence which shall answer all your prayers, terminate all your sorrows, and reward all your services, shall then be pronounced on you, and shall call you as good and faithful servants to share in your Saviour's rest.

ADDRESS XXXI.

PHIL. I. 21.

“ To me to live is Christ.”

In these few words, the piety which is formed and animated by the spirit of the gospel, is expressed in a most apt and striking manner. Though this profession was made to men, it was uttered under the most solemn impressions of his presence who searches all hearts; and the apostle might appeal to his conduct as furnishing the fullest evidence that it was not the boast of hypocrisy. To him life was valuable, from the opportunities which it afforded for advancing the cause, and exemplifying the spirit of his Master; and in every theme, and in every labour, Christ was all.

He states this not in the spirit of vain glory, but that the disciples might see that he enjoined no devotedness to the Redeemer which it was not his wish and his study to maintain. There were many things peculiar in the pious attainments of Paul, yet the language which he here employs may be considered as descriptive of the character and aim of every disciple of Jesus, and there is not one whose supreme desire it is not to live and die to the Lord.

The grace of Christ is the principle of the believer's life. It is this that quickens the dead soul, which maintains the spiritual life, animates all its graces with vigour, and guards it from the influence by which it might be enfeebled or destroyed. The permanence and

the prosperity of this life depend not on any efforts which we can make, or on any watchfulness which we can exercise, but on his influence who "worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure." This influence he imparts in the use of appointed means, and to wait on him in these is felt by the saint as his duty and his pleasure. "O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit."

The example of Christ is the pattern of the believer's life. While others follow the multitude, or those whom influence or talent have raised to eminence, the determination of the good man is this, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." Never was excellence so bright and so lovely seen on earth as when Jesus was there; and among all the blessed on high, there are no graces which shine with such lustre, or which have been tried with such temptations and sorrows, as his. Do you make the example of Christ the subject of your frequent study, and do you feel, at every examination of it, stronger regret that you have so little of his spirit, and more eager desires to walk as he did? May the services of this day have a transforming influence on you, and when you shall see him as he is, you shall have all your wishes, and all your aims fulfilled in being completely like him.

The service of Christ is the work of the believer's life. His saints are they who do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word. They feel that he has a claim to every talent, and to every moment; and so far from supposing it possible that they can serve both God and mammon, or wishing that it were so, they yield their homage only to a Master in heaven, and abhor the thought of murmuring at any mandate of his will, or any place or degree of labour. O Lord Jesus, none that knows thee will call thee a hard

master. I am never so happy as when acting for thee, and so easy is the yoke that it is my delight to carry it.

The glory of Christ is the object of the good man's life. Redeemed for this purpose, he seeks the advancement of it in the knowledge of his will, and the obedience of his laws, the magnifying of his name, and the extension of his kingdom. This is the object which he hath in view in all his pursuits, and unless this is gained, no success nor applause will gratify him. O Lord, I will glorify thee in poverty by contentment, in prosperity by beneficence, in adversity by patience and hope, in thy ordinances by spiritual worship, and in the duties of obedience by dependence not on them but on thee.

The presence of Christ is the happiness of the believer's life. In communion with him the pious affections are gratified, the sweetest consolation is imparted, and the most painful doubts and anxieties are removed. With him our interests are safe, and our salvation is sure. Is it true, with regard to you, that you cannot be happy but where Jesus is? In looking back on your past life, what you once deemed scenes of enjoyment appear like a vain dream, but the seasons which you have spent with Jesus seem to you like the days of heaven. The bliss of heaven is in his love, and its light in the brightness of his countenance.

Some of you perhaps are now saying, in the despondency of your hearts, "Happy are they who can use Paul's language, but I am so feeble, so cold, and so stupid, that I am either a stranger to spiritual life entirely, or it is about to give up the ghost. Instead of the language of exultation, I have been praying since I came to this place, 'My soul cleaveth to the dust, quicken thou me according to thy word.' I can see

nought of the life of Christ in me, and nought can be discovered in the examination of my spiritual character but gross deficiencies, and coldness, and languor, in every moral effort." But I see the humility of Christ in your abasement, and his faith in your keeping the way of holiness, in spite of all discouragements. In your present conflict, your enemies are trying you as they tried him, and his victory secures yours. And the bread and the water of life are now set before you, which revive the languid, and encourage the desponding, while they establish the vigorous, and enhance the joys of the happy.

After the Service.

You have been mourning at the communion table over your sluggishness in the service of Christ, the small measure of conformity to his image which you have attained, and the dead works by which you have dishonoured him, and injured the best interests of your souls; let your future conduct shew that you have felt this deeply, and that you are resolved to serve him in holiness and in righteousness before him all the days of your lives. Let that glorious object which is now set before you, "the dying love of your Redeemer," be ever present to your view, and never let it lose its power over your hearts. In that death the graces of the Saviour were most triumphantly displayed; it was the noblest test of his submission as the Father's servant; by its influence all genuine obedience is animated, and to its bitter sorrow every enjoyment even through eternity shall be traced. "Always bear about with you in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, and let the life of Jesus be manifest in your mortal bodies."

Let the spirit of his death, and the energy of his life, give sobriety to youth, and cheerfulness to age, probity in business, and devotion in solitude, zeal in duty, and hope in death.

Consider how Christ lived, and still lives for you. While he was on earth, every purpose which he formed, and every emotion which he felt, every act which he did, and every pang which he suffered, were devoted to your salvation; and in heaven it is said that he ever liveth to make intercession for us, as if that was his chief object in his exalted state. He not only pleads the cause of his people, and prepares for their reception, but for them he reigns, and for them he triumphs. Let the faith of these truths excite you to greater exertions in his service, and in every scene to which he calls you, let this be your first inquiry, "What can I do for my Saviour here?" The men of the world, according to their various tempers and inclinations, live for different objects. To some pleasure is the sole charm of life, to others wealth is its chief good, and to others pomp is its only glory; but let it be your care to shew that you have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit of God, and that the favour and the image, the honour and the service of Christ, are all your salvation, and all your desire. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

And to you to die shall be gain. Death shall translate you from a scene where disappointment blasts many a fair hope, and where your brightest joys are torn from you in the moments of ecstasy, where corruption wars against the soul, and grace often strug-

gles for existence, to a world of perfection and felicity. How dreadful is the loss of worldly men in death! Not only is every earthly advantage, every carnal pleasure, and every flattering hope, taken from them, but every opportunity of grace, and every possibility of salvation. These are succeeded by utter despair, and by misery that shall never end. But in death you relinquish nothing from which it is not for your advantage to be separated, and to go to heaven, though by the most agonizing mode of dying, is far better than to continue here.

In that world, you will still feel, "To me to live is Christ." Eternal life is in his Son. There the Lamb leads, and the redeemed follow. He commands, and they obey. The Lamb is in the midst of the throne, and they sing forth the honour of his name, and make his praise glorious. The Lamb dwells among them, and they are happy. Christ is in every movement of the heart, and in every act of homage—in every feeling of enjoyment, and in every song of praise—in every review of the past, and in every prospect of the future.

Your translation to that world may be a loss to your friends, and to society. To your friends it brings with it the loss of your prudent counsel, your watchful care, your improving conversation, and agreeable fellowship; but it can be made up by him who is the Husband of the widow, and the Father of the fatherless. To society it will bring with it the loss of your influence, and exertions for the public good, but God can supply it by raising up others more active, and more successful in promoting the righteousness which establishes a church, and which exalteth a nation. With God is the residue of the Spirit, and in his hand are the hearts of all. And now I dismiss you with your

Saviour's blessing, to his grace I commend you, and under his care I leave you. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

ADDRESS XXXII.

EZEK. XLVI. 10.

"And the Prince in the midst of them, when they go in, shall go in; and when they go forth, shall go forth."

THESE words refer literally to the rulers of the Jews mingling with them in the services of the sanctuary. In the house of prayer, the rich and the poor meet together; and rulers should consider that they are as dependent on God as the meanest of their people, and that association with them in religious ordinances is the best security for the protection of the prince, and for the allegiance of the subject. But this passage may be viewed as pointing out to us that presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in the worship of the sanctuary, without which it will yield us little pleasure or advantage. How gracious and encouraging is the promise of his presence, "Where two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them!"

"The Prince," is a title frequently given to our Lord in Scripture, and we require to be reminded of it, that we may give him the glory which is due to his name. By the Father's appointment he is invested with regal dignity; and what has been said of some earthly princes by lips of flattery, is true in its fullest sense of him, "that he reigns in the hearts of his people." Wisdom

and justice, power and grace, shine in all his administration. He is clothed with majesty, and girt about with might: eternal life is at his disposal, and the keys of hell and of death are in his hand. In the praise of earthly princes genius employs all its powers, but in the praise of Messiah, your Prince, his voice is heard whose testimony is as much superior in glory to human applause, as his wisdom and purity transcend that of erring mortals. "To the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom."

We see not yet all things put under him, but we know that his kingdom shall rule over all. Already have the darkness and the abominations of heathenism passed away in many regions before him, and the time hastens on when the proudest of his rivals shall be humbled in the dust, and every tongue confess that he is Lord. Earth, so long a scene of slaughter and confusion, shall, through his influence, be formed into the abode of harmony and love, and bless him as the Prince of peace. Hell, filled by those "who would not have him to reign over them," shall proclaim the guilt and folly of his despisers, while heaven, shining in his glory, and resounding with his triumphs, shall raise from all its borders the homage of adoring gratitude and love, "My Lord and my God."

But this Prince is in the midst of his people. This is a common representation of our Lord's station. It was typified in paradise by the tree of life in the midst of the garden; under the law, by the tabernacle of the congregation, which was placed in the middle of the camp, and by the mercy-seat, which stood between the cherubims in the temple. In heaven he is the Lamb in the midst of the throne; and, to point out his constant inspection and vigilant care in the church

on earth, he is said to walk in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. "Cry out, and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee."

This expression intimates that he is visible to all. He is not described as surrounded by a few who engross his attentions, while those at a distance can catch only a partial glimpse of him, but as encircled by all; and from every part of the circle he is beheld and admired. The beauty of the Lord, ye timid and dejected souls, is displayed for you; and if your eyes do not behold it so clearly as others, it is because corruption hath spread its films over them. Implore him to impart to you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; and if you can say that it is your supreme desire to have your hearts filled with his love, and captivated by his beauty, you shall "see his goings, even the steps of majesty of your God, and your king in the sanctuary."

Christ also is in the midst of his people, as accessible to all. Earthly princes are accessible only to a few, and to approach them requires much influence, and a compliance with many rules and precautions; but Jesus saith, "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for lo I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee." The feeblest voice may whisper its complaints into his ear, the trembling hand may touch the hem of his garment, and the eye of sorrow may drop its tear upon his feet. Every suppliant may put his petition into his hand, and receive an answer directly from himself. Little children may come to him with their hosannahs, and the aged and the helpless with their many infirmities. In this circle I see attention sitting at his feet, entreaty stretching out its hands, affection walking by his side, faith leaning on his arm, and obe-

dience treading in his steps. Say not, "Who shall ascend up to heaven, to bring Christ down from above? or who shall descend into the deep, to bring him up from below? for the word is nigh thee, and Christ in that word."

But Christ, as in the midst of his people, is ready to perform for them every necessary office. He is at hand to supply the wants of the indigent, and to lighten the burdens of the sorrowful; to strengthen the weak hands, to revive the spirits of the humble, and to bind up the hearts of the contrite. He is in his church like a father in his family, to receive their testimonies of confidence and affection, and to teach and warn them in all wisdom. And he is there as a prince in his court, receiving the homage of his courtiers, and distributing his favours among them. History records that a heathen emperor sighed over a day as lost, because on it he had conferred no favour: While we admire the generosity which awakened this regret, we can rejoice that, in the administration of him who is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, not a moment is lost to mercy.

How pleasing is the assurance that he will go in with his people when they go in! Were the Lord Jesus present merely as a spectator, the idea of this would fill you with terror, for you know that your performance of religious duties is very different from what it ought to be. But he is with you to aid your devotions by his influence, to check the motions of corruption, to enliven the religious affections, to purify your services, and to present them to his Father.

When you go in to public praise, he is there to inspire the heart with pious ardour, and in public prayer he is there to excite holy desires, and to fill your mouths with arguments. He goes with you to the

hearing of the word, to make it the power of God to your salvation. He goes with his saints to the place of baptism, to take in his arms the little children there presented to him, and “to pour his Spirit on his people’s seed, and his blessing on their offspring.” You have felt him present with you, I trust, when you were examining yourselves, pointing out to you the heavenly origin and tendency of your governing principles, fortifying you against the harsh conclusions of a jealous and desponding spirit, and making your deeds manifest that they have been wrought in God.

And now, when you have come in to the Lord’s supper, he is along with you to record your vows, to receive your homage, and to make it the communion of his body and blood. Let the consciousness of his presence stir you up to perform the duties of this day in a manner becoming those who are acting under his eye. How solemn, and yet how delightful is this place, which he fills with glory, and blesses with peace!

After the Service.

The Redeemer assures you that he will go forth with you when you go out. It is a great mistake to imagine that we only require his presence when we engage in religious ordinances. It is most needful that he should be with us when we retire from them, to keep the “evil one” from catching away the good which has been wrought, to maintain the fervour of devotion, and to enable us to act suitably to our profession. You have been hearing his word, he will go forth with you to incline you to obey it. You have been shewing forth the Lord’s death; he will go forth with you to enable you to exhibit the moral influence

of his cross. The saints of God feel many anxieties lest their feet should slide as they descend from the mount, and their profession be disgraced by their folly; but he will go down with you, who is able to keep you from falling. Amid the pleasures of religious fellowship, it is painful to think of the evils of the world, and of the malice of the wicked. You are quitting the harbour for the troubled sea, but he is with you who rules in the raging of the ocean; and in the very hour when the idea of being left by him to destruction is filling you with horror, he will come to you walking on the waves, and dissipate your fears. He will go forth with you to mark whether your conduct corresponds with your profession, if your resolutions are kept, and your vows are fulfilled. The eyes of your brethren are on you, and you feel a desire to maintain their respect and their confidence; but there is an eye also upon you which follows you where human inspection cannot penetrate, and marks every wish, and every thought. "Study to show thyself approved unto God."

Be zealous for the glory of your Prince's name, the rights of his throne, and the obligations of his law. Active and steady goodness is the best allegiance to your Prince and Saviour. Be regular in your attendance on religious ordinances. Shall the presence of Christ ever become less attractive to you? He notes every instance of neglect of his worship, and will call you to an account for it; and if the excuses of many are so frivolous that they cannot offer them to their own consciences without shame and fear, how shall they present them to him "who is greater than our hearts, and who knows all things?"

Be conscientious in your observance of all private ordinances; and rejoice that Jesus goes with the pious to the closet of prayer to animate their devotion; to the

scene of meditation, that he may elevate and tranquilize the soul; and to the secret corner, where the Bible is read, to open the understanding, and to sanctify the heart by his truth. The shepherd boy reading his Bible on the mountain's side, and the peasant shut out from many of the sources of knowledge, have often shewn how "the entrance of God's word gives light, and makes the simple wise." He will be with you in your domestic worship, to shew his love to a pious family, to bless the habitations of the just, and to point them out to attending angels as an image of heaven.

Let the consciousness of Christ's being with you keep you from every thing offensive in his sight. "Hear, O my people, and I will testify to thee; there shall be no strange God in the midst of thee." Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy by our evil passions, or shall hypocrisy compass him about with lies? If this is the case, he will leave us with the marks of his abhorrence, or if he stays, it will be to take vengeance on our inventions.

Beware of going to any scene where you cannot expect him to go in with you. None can ask his Lord to go with him to the scene of licentious amusement; and no tokens of the Saviour's presence are to be seen in the laughter of folly, and the dissolute excess which is worse than mad. It is impossible for a good man to go to such scenes without injury to sobriety and to seriousness, and when he adds to this the encouragement which the wicked take from such conduct to scoff at the restraints and the enjoyments of religion, he will turn away from every enticement to dissipation. But be of good comfort, Christians; your Lord will go with you wherever you go at his call. When he calls

you into the scene of trial, he will go with you to fortify your virtue, and he will go out with you from it to teach you to walk circumspectly. He will go in with you to the furnace of affliction, that your experience there may be like that of the three children in Babylon. The astonished monarch said, "Lo, I see four men loose walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." And he will go forth with you to heighten the joy, and to secure the fruit of deliverance. He will go with you to the house of mourning to give the oil of joy, and he will go forth with you, that in your path, darkened by the shadows of death, you may walk in the light of his countenance.

The time is coming when you must go forth from the world by a path dark and dismal. Your dear companions in all your former dangers and sorrows cannot then go with you. But you shall not depart alone: he will take you by the hand, and be your guide through death. And he will go in with you to heaven. Are you terrified at the idea of going to God the judge of all? He will go with you to present you to his Father as the subjects of his kingdom, and the friends of his heart; and his presence will open to you all the mansions of rest, and all the fountains of joy. Amen.

SERMON V.

The Ascension notified.

JOHN XX. 17.

“ Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father : but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.”

THE narrative of which these words form a part, is uncommonly beautiful and affecting. The events which it relates are highly important, and the impressions which it describes are the genuine movements of the purest feelings. It teaches the most valuable lessons in a style whose sweet simplicity affords a fine contrast to the laboured rant and puerile embellishments of false taste, and touches without effort or parade every principle of sensibility in the heart.

Mary had come to our Saviour's tomb to pay the last tribute of respect to his sacred body. She wished to behold him whom she had seen so barbarously treated, reposing in that quiet mansion where the wicked cease from troubling, and to mourn by his side whose friendship and whose mercy had been the honour and the happiness of her life. To her great surprise she found the tomb empty, and immediately communicated the intelligence to Peter and John. When they were convinced, by inspecting the tomb, that the body was not there, they went away to their own home; but

Mary could not quit this scene. Dreading that her Saviour's body had been taken away to be subjected to some new indignity, she wept bitterly. The sight of the two angels in white sitting in the sepulchre, could not assuage her sorrow; and no appearance, however splendid, could divert her mind from the subject which completely engrossed her feelings. A generous heart may, during deep sorrow, heave a sigh for the misery which it passes by, but it sees nought in the scene of prosperity or pomp to which its emotions can be assimilated. Our Lord knew the sincerity and the bitterness of her grief, and, with a considerate kindness, would not suffer her to continue long a prey to distracting solicitude. The manner in which he made himself known to her, beautifully exhibits his wisdom and love. Jesus asked her, "Why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?" She, supposing him to be the gardener, said, "If thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." She thought she would convey the body to some place where she would have the melancholy satisfaction of knowing that it slept unmolested. Though our Lord was pleased with that affection to him which this purpose expressed, he could not keep her longer in anxiety and suspense, but in a tone which her ear and her heart instantly recognized, said to her, "Mary." It is impossible to describe her astonishment and rapture at this blessed moment. She could only say, "Rabboni." Her heart was so full that she could not utter another syllable, but kneeled down to embrace his feet, to give vent to a joy that was unspeakable. At that moment Jesus addressed to her the words of the text; in which he taught her to prefer the comfort of her brethren, and obedience to his will, to the indulgence of her own feelings.

In this discourse, I shall direct your attention to the check which Christ gave to Mary's expressions of affection and joy ; to the view which is here presented of his ascension ; and to the notice of this which he ordered her to convey to the disciples.

I. It appears difficult to account for this prohibition, "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father." Had it been the homage of an impure and hypocritical heart, it would not have been surprising that it was rejected by our Lord; but he knew the soul of Mary was pure and devout, and yet he permits not the most respectful testimony which it could give of its feelings. He who gave his cheek to the kiss of Judas, would not permit Mary to touch his feet. Some have supposed that this prohibition was intended to shew that the familiarity which had marked his intercourse with his followers, was no longer to be admitted. The condescension which might become the Man of Sorrows, accorded not with the dignity to which he was now advancing. But it seems more probable that our Saviour acted thus, because he wished not that time occupied in paying her homage to him which was so strongly required for the advantage of her brethren. She imagined that he was now withdrawing from the world; but he tells her that this would not be the case for some time, and that she would have sufficient opportunity hereafter to express her regard. The perplexities of the disciples required immediate relief; and her first duty was to impart to them the glad tidings of his resurrection and unabated love.

How strongly does this circumstance teach us to prefer the spiritual welfare of our brethren to our own gratification! We must not refuse to quit the happiest scene of religious enjoyment, when Christ calls us to

comfort the feeble minded, or be unwilling to leave the place where the word and spirit of Christ are shedding light and gladness around us, to visit the bewildered and the desponding. Nor is this a hard saying, for there is a great pleasure in benevolent exertion; and did we think, in the moments of pious delight, on the mournful state of those who are sinking in despair, we would be ready to relieve them by every possible effort. The sacrifices made by such benevolence the Redeemer can compensate by a communion more blissful than any we have relinquished. The worldling would treat with scorn the proposal to leave the scene of gaiety to minister to the poor and the wretched; but the grace of God inclines the pious to relinquish pleasures far higher and nobler at the call of duty. And he certainly deserves such a sacrifice as this from us, "Who, though he was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich." The great moral lesson taught us by this part of the text, is set before us by Paul, in the beginning of the 15th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans: "We then that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification, for even Christ pleased not himself."

II. Let us now consider the view here given by our Lord of his ascension.

His language intimates its certainty; for of it he had the fullest assurance. It was not like the splendid visions by which the hopes of the ambitious are so often raised and disappointed, nor like the vain expectations by which many in the humblest scenes are deluded. There never was a human heart superior to every vain hope but his own. In his prospects he

was guided by the designs and by the promises of his Father, and by the unerring suggestions of that Spirit which was given him without measure, and whose influence was unremitted. He knew also that he had merited, by his obedience and sufferings, the glory which was set before him ; and such was his conviction of the justice and truth of his Father, that he was confident it could not be withheld.

Mark with what simplicity Christ speaks of his ascension. When men make mention of any triumph that is before them, they commonly expatiate on those circumstances of glory by which it shall be distinguished, but Christ merely states the fact. He might have described the cloud which was to be his chariot,—the thousands of angels who should accompany him,—the captives he should drag behind him,—and the crown, the throne, and the name which were prepared for him ; but he passes by all these, and speaks only of the Eternal Father, in whose society and approbation he would find his heaven.

At the same time there is a striking majesty in his language, “ I ascend ;” and who is there that can oppose it ? Shall the jealousy of the Romans, and of those perverse Jews, who persecuted him under the pretext of his aiming at temporal sovereignty, attempt it ? He was crucified in weakness, but he shall now live and reign through the power of God. Shall the principalities and powers whom he so lately spoiled, and over whom he triumphed on the cross, prevent it ? “ He will tread them in his anger, and trample them in his fury.” Shall he who loosed the pains of death, and called him forth from the grave, close against him the gates of heaven ? He hears his voice of welcome, “ Sit thou at my right hand ” Shall the air be less subject to his control than the sea, which became a

pavement for his feet, or the winds, which sunk into quietness at his command?

The mode of expression suggests that it would not be long delayed. His father was calling him to himself, and our interest required that he should enter within the veil. He had important reasons, on his own account, why he should thus depart; and it is with reference to these that he said to his disciples, that if they loved him they would rejoice because he went to the Father. If their love to him had been as enlightened, pure, and generous as it ought to have been, his exaltation would have delighted them, even though it deprived them of his society.

On this part of the subject, our attention must be fixed on the view which our Lord gives of him to whom he was to ascend. He was to ascend to rule and bless the angels who had ministered to him in his humble state, to receive their tribute of worship and admiration, and to hear his worth proclaimed throughout all their various orders, triumphing in his exaltation, and happy in his bliss. He was to ascend to the spirits of the just, who had been admitted to heaven, through the anticipated virtue of his sacrifice, who should cast their crowns at his feet, and ascribe to him the praise of all their salvation; but to this our Lord does not advert, for it was the idea of going to his Father, which engrossed his mind; to that Being whose Son he was from eternity, who was his God as he was man, and whom in this capacity he worshipped and served. It was most delightful to our Lord, to think that his Father and his God, whose absence he so lately mourned, and "who had bruised him, and put him to grief," would now render him, by his countenance, most blessed for ever; that he to whom he had commended his spirit would re-

ceive him in soul and body to glory, and that he to whose honour he had lived and died, would now "glorify him with his own self, with that glory which he had with him before the world was." The most blessed and glorious object which our Lord beheld in heaven, was his Father's arms expanded to embrace him. When Christ descended to our earth, he came to scorn, to want, and to persecution; but he ascended to all the endearments of a Father's love, and to all the rewards which his God could confer.

But our Lord tells us that the Being to whom he was to ascend, was the God and Father of his people also. He is their Father by adopting grace, and their God through that covenant which was ratified in his blood. It gave our Lord the sweetest delight to think that he was going to one so nearly allied, and so graciously disposed to his people, who, instead of disliking or thwarting his proposals for their happiness, would approve and promote them. How remote was our Saviour's heart from every principle of selfishness or jealousy! The benevolence which glowed with such warmth in his heart through life, which animated all he said and did, and which many waters could not quench, burned with equal warmth since his resurrection, and displayed its influence in his prospects of glory. It was necessary that our Saviour should state this, to show the interest which his church has in his exaltation, and that our rejoicing in it may be more abundant.

III. Let us now, in the third place, consider the notice of his ascension, which Christ ordered Mary to convey to the disciples.

1. It was a message of forgiveness. The disciples had acted a most unworthy part to the Lord Jesus. They had disregarded their obligations to

him as a benefactor, their duty to him as a master, and their fidelity to him as a friend. Men find it most difficult to forgive the neglect or treachery which they meet with from friends, in the day of their distress. Had I been thus treated, do they say, in the day of my prosperity, I could have borne it, but to leave me overwhelmed and helpless in the time of trouble, can never be pardoned. I expected from them the sympathy and aid of friendship, but I found not even the pity of common humanity. If such persons are restored to affluence and honour, they speak with bitter indignation of the baseness of their former friends, and will kindle into rage at the most guarded proposal of a reconciliation. But the ways and thoughts of Jesus are very different from ours. He does not send Mary to tell them that the Saviour, whom they so wickedly abandoned, was now lifting up his head above his enemies, and would punish their treachery as it deserved, and that as they had found how kindly he could act as a friend, they should now feel his severity as an enemy. Instead of such a message, which they deserved, by calling them his brethren, and by describing his Father and his God as theirs, he intimates to them that no unfavourable sentiment respecting them existed in his mind; that his death, which had so shocked them, had obtained the forgiveness of all their offences; that he would not upbraid them with what was past, and that it should never call up on his face a single frown.

We cannot think of this generosity, without exclaiming, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, for he delighteth in mercy." Ye trembling souls, whom the remembrance of broken

vows, and of shameful perfidy to your best friend, is now filling with terror, be of good comfort, for to you he is now saying, "The Lord hath put away thy sin, be not afraid, thou shalt not die."

We are taught by this conduct of the Lord Jesus, not to expose ourselves to be again deceived by the treacherous, for this would be an act of folly inconsistent with the duty which we owe to ourselves and to society, but to repress all desire of revenge; and when friends have acted with unkindness to us, through the misrepresentations and influence of others, to receive them, on their repentance, into our confidence, and to render them good for evil.

2. It was a message of affection. The disciples might be ready to imagine, that though his generosity would lead him to pardon their misconduct, he could not esteem and love them as he had done before. They knew how common it was for men, while they professed to forgive ill usage, to resolve, and to say that they would not forget it. They might be afraid also, that he would cease to remember them in his advancement, and that the glory to which he was rising might excite impressions unfavourable to persons so poor as they were; but the connexion which our Lord in this message describes as existing betwixt them, was calculated to impress them more strongly with the stability of his love than the most solemn protestations could have done. His attachment to them was not founded on their good qualities, nor could it be destroyed by their forsaking him. "Having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them to the end."

In this message we may view him as checking in them the idea that he might be unmindful, or ashamed of them in heaven. This was impossible, for in his Father he should see their Father, and in his

God their God. Love softens the dazzling splendours of the Mediator's throne, guides all its measures, and blesses all its subjects. Let the pious who are sinking under a consciousness of their unworthiness, who are saying, "O that thou wert as my brother, I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother's house; I would put forth my best efforts to honour thee, his left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me; but I have forfeited his love, and I am certain from his coldness, and I must say righteous severity, that I have lost all share in his regard;"—hear how he calls them his sisters and his brethren. From his throne he surveys you assembled this day to obey his dying command, and to devote yourselves to him, and hears you saying to him as the sons of Jacob did to Joseph, "Forgive, we pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren and their sin, for they did unto thee evil," and like that generous man he will comfort you, and speak kindly to you. This is the language in which he will address the mourner in Zion: "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee, in a little wrath I have hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." He was in all things made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful high priest.

3. It was a message of consolation. It was not only calculated to relieve that anxiety and distress which the consciousness of guilt, and the apprehension of our Saviour's displeasure must have excited, but it was fitted to dissipate the sorrow which had overwhelmed them on our Lord's account. Unworthy as their conduct had been, they sincerely loved their Master; and the shame and the suffering to which

they saw him subjected, filled them with the deepest sorrow. They heard of his crucifixion with horror, and their hearts lingered about his grave as the receptacle of a Master whom they revered, and of a friend whom they loved above every human being, and has innocence so unspotted perished thus infamously? Has mercy tender like his, sunk before its barbarous foes? Are the lips which dropped with wisdom now sealed up for ever; and is he whom disease and death obeyed, now seeing corruption in the sepulchre? Amidst such mournful and terrifying thoughts, this message assures them that their master is alive. They had seen him led away by his enemies, and conducted before an unrighteous judge; but they are told that now he is going to his Father and to his God. They imagined that he was still an inhabitant of the tomb, but he was now on his way to the regions of immortality; and so far from being still, as they thought, the prey of his enemies, he had arisen and scattered them. They dwelt in grief and indignation on the cruelty with which men had treated him; but he leads their view to the goodness which his Father had laid up for him, and which he was now about to possess.

The restoration of a friend to health, to honour, and to prosperity, is very gratifying to the heart, and will make those that love him to rejoice, and to give thanks even while they labour under personal sorrow, from which they have no hope of relief; and much more delightful was it to his disciples, to hear of the exaltation of such a friend as Christ, especially when they reflected that it was for their sakes that he was afflicted and oppressed, and that his glorification is the pledge of theirs.

4. It was a message of caution. Great is the force

of early prejudices. The idea of a temporal Messiah had been long cherished among the Jews. It pervaded all ranks, and was instilled with care into the mind of their children. It supported their hearts amidst their national calamities; and their present galling subjection to the yoke of Rome, was mitigated by the hope that their chains should be broken by the "Salvation of Israel." The disciples of Christ had imbibed this idea. They imagined that Jesus of Nazareth was the destined restorer of the departed glories of their country; and all the poverty of his circumstances, and all the spirituality of his discourses and conduct, did not rectify their misconceptions. Every display which he gave of his miraculous powers, and every proof which was afforded of the admiration and attachment of the multitude, served to confirm these impressions. In this state of mind our Saviour's unresisting submission to the violence of his enemies mortified and confounded them, and disappointed ambition mingled its tears with those which sorrow and affection shed round his tomb. "We trusted, said they, that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel." Now their Master well knew that these ideas would return with full force to their minds when they heard of his resurrection; that they would view it as a sign from heaven, to summon the nation to his standard, and as a pledge of his subduing the world before him. To prevent opinions from being cherished so carnal and so fallacious, he sends this message to inform them that he was about to ascend to heaven. Instead of collecting armies, and pursuing the work of devastation and slaughter; instead of gratifying the pride and the revenge of the Jews, by subduing the heathen under them; instead of shewing them waving banners, cities in flames, and garments rolled in blood, he tells them that he was going to be

head over all things to the church, to order "repentance and remission of sins to be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem;" to unite men of opposite habits and tempers in harmony and friendship; and by the virtues of his cross to draw the Gentiles to the obedience of faith. He was going to a place, and to a scene, where the objects of human ambition are seen divested of that glare which dazzles the eyes of weak mortals, and where God is all in all.

Let us learn from this message, to check all low and carnal views of religious objects, and to remember that the gospel kingdom is not of this world. Had this been attended to, its discipline would never have been enforced by penal statutes, nor would the observance of its rights have been made the passport to offices of emolument and distinction. Beneficence is the use which Christianity makes of power, and the purpose for which she employs wealth is charity. The fear of God is her grand restraint, the meek and quiet spirit her only ornament, the winning of souls her only conquest, and the approbation of her Lord her only crown.

5. It was a message most encouraging to their faith and hope. They had been assured by their Master, that if he went away he would send the Comforter to them; that in his Father's house there were many mansions, and that he would prepare a place for them, where they should abide with him for ever. Now, nothing could be better adapted to recal these assurances to their minds, and to strengthen their faith in them than this message? It showed that he was still mindful of his promises to them, and that their happiness was still the great object of his wishes.

Besides, as all things were to be delivered to him,

by his Father, he was able to supply them with every thing that was necessary for the discharge of their duty. They might have to oppose the prejudices of the multitude, the cavils of the disputer, and the contempt of the proud, to sacrifice their nearest connexions, to relinquish every secular advantage, and to resist even unto blood; but they had a friend in heaven whose grace would be sufficient for them, and whose strength would be perfected in their weakness.

This intelligence was fitted also to confirm their faith in the acceptance of his sacrifice by the Father, and to shew them with what confidence they might rely on it, and with what reason they might recommend it to the dependence of others. Since by his own blood he hath entered into the holy place, it is a proof that he hath obtained eternal redemption for us, and that in calling the guilty to trust in that blood, we call them to a hope which shall never make them ashamed.

This intelligence held out to them the hope of reunion with him. If he considered himself as their brother, he would not suffer them to be for ever separated from him. They had heard him pray that they might share his glory before his passion; and he would not neglect to urge this afterwards. They had shared his poverty and toils; and having suffered with him they must also reign with him. I may add, that it was fitted to maintain their confidence in his intercession. A brother could not be cold in pleading for his brethren, nor could a father listen to an intercessor so beloved in behalf of objects so dear with indifference. To those who have such important interests in dependence in the court of heaven, who have so many charges to be answered, so many wants to be

supplied, and so many services to be accepted, it must be most delightful to be assured that they have an Advocate with the Father, to whose heart all that pertains to them is dear, and who is in all respects entitled to our unlimited trust.

Such is the effect which this message should have upon us ; and instead of listening to it with a wavering faith or a languid hope, let this be our language, " Lord, Jesus, I trust thee for earth and for heaven. My eternal all I leave in thy hands, without a feeling of distrust. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

Christians, this subject to which your attention has been directed, suggests matter for self-examination in all its parts. Are you willing to sacrifice any enjoyment at the call of Jesus, to do good to your brethren? or do you think, that since life hath so few pleasures, you ought not to be required to relinquish any of them? The will of Jesus is dearer to a genuine disciple than his own comfort. Do you love Christ as a Brother, and Jehovah as his God and his Father as well as your own? Are your hearts in heaven, where Jesus is? Have you felt the influence of his ascension subduing your carnal inclinations; and is there no worldly object which you would prefer to spiritual blessings in heavenly places? Happy are they who have the witness in themselves that such is the case. They are fit for the table of the Lord here, and will be prepared for the inheritance of the saints in light.

This subject also directs us as to the views with which we should observe the Lord's Supper. He who sent this message to the disciples, commands us to call you to eat of his bread, and to drink of the wine

which he hath mingled. He who intimates his ascension in language so gracious, announces his presence in this place in expressions as affectionate: "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse. I have gathered my myrrh with my spice. I have eaten my honey comb with my honey. I have drunk my wine with my milk; eat, O friends, drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved!" Let this invitation be heard with that joy which it is so fitted to excite, and with that reverence and humility which suitable views of Christ's character and of your own must inspire. What you have heard of your Lord's ascension, will shew you that his death must have been to God a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour, and thus will animate you in glorying in his cross. Jesus on the cross and on the throne, is equally precious to them that believe. He is our Saviour, and friend, and brother in both. Let us beseech him to give us the blessings of his presence. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him." He will not forbid us to touch him. He wishes you to cleave to him with pious attachment, and to say, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." His ascension was distinguished by his magnificence; and much has the church been benefited by the gifts which he then bestowed; but his stores are inexhaustible, and in all ages he is known as the giver of grace and glory, and the communion table is the chosen scene of his favours.

The subject is also fitted to animate good men to duty, and to reconcile them to death. The precepts of religion are your Father's will: in Christ's example you have a most engaging pattern of obedience, and this is the right way to the mansions of rest. And

say not, were I to ascend as Christ did, a removal to heaven would be to me no way terrible, but a death-bed has agonies, temptations, and sacrifices, which I tremble to think of, and the grave is the abode of darkness and corruption. . But the keys of hell and of death are in the hands of your Lord. He can support the failing heart, and give beauty and immortality to the mouldering clay. And the Redeemer authorises you to use his language in the text; often has it formed a part of the dying Christian's farewell to his friends; and often have triumphant faith and love held forth their prospects in these words.

Finally, This subject is terrible to the ungodly. Ye are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, and ye will not relinquish the enjoyments of sin for the sobriety and purity of religion. Ye follow sinful pleasure as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for its life. Ye are not the brethren of Jesus, for "ye are of your father the devil, and his works ye do." Jesus is gone to heaven to reign till all his enemies are made his footstool; and he who mercifully binds up the broken heart of afflicted piety, shall dash the stubborn rebel in pieces. Think on the dreadful prospect which death opens to you. Evil spirits shall surround your death-bed, waiting till your last breath warrants them to drag you away to the place of endless torment. The wicked in hell shall see Jesus too high for their contempt to reach, and too happy for their curses to injure him. Submit then, to the yoke, and accept of the offered salvation of Christ; and may his Spirit incline you to renounce every sin, to follow his steps, and to have your conversation in heaven. Amen.

ADDRESS XXXIII.

Mary's Privilege at the Sepulchre.

It is no uncommon thing to see a mourner weeping at a grave. It is there that nature asserts its power over the heart, and there friendship, taking its last farewell, drops the tear that flows from the meltings of love and sorrow. But what an interesting mourner is now presented to your view! Mary stands at the tomb of Jesus, and weeps; she stoops down to look at the place where her Lord had been laid, and beholds in it two angels in white. This garb was emblematical of their purity; and as this was the colour of garments worn in scenes, and on days of rejoicing, it was an intimation that the Saviour had triumphed, and that what had made angels so happy was no cause of alarm or despair to her.

How instructive was the posture of these angels! The one was at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. Angels had ministered to our Lord at the commencement of his course in Bethlehem, and at the consummation of all things they shall attend him in their glory. They minister to Christ the head, but they disdain not to befriend the obscurest member of his body. The head is as the most fine gold, and the feet are clay, yet they minister to both.

But, like the cherubim stationed on each end of the mercy-seat, this position of the angels might intimate that through Christ alone we have peace with God,

and access into that grace in which believers stand. After man had fallen he was driven from paradise, and the Lord placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubim, and a flaming sword, which turned every way, to guard the path to the tree of life. But when man was redeemed by the obedience of the second Adam, angels were placed in the tomb with the olive branch in their hands, and the voice of welcome in their mouths, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." None of the guards or of the enemies of our Lord durst enter the tomb, but pious affection is invited to contemplate the trophies of his victory, and the place of his rest. While thus employed, ye are animated to sing, "The Lord lives, blessed be my rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted." Mary was in too dark and perplexed a state to understand such intimations, and she refused to be comforted till Jesus at once shed light, peace, and joy over her mind by a single word. And to you he saith, "Fear not, I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by my name; thou art mine." Your name he will confess before his Father, and it shall never be blotted from the book of life. Mary, on recognizing his voice, turned herself, and said unto him, "Rabboni, that is, Master." The rapture which she felt was mingled with holy awe; and she thought it more becoming to express the homage she owed him than her transport. And are you addressing him in such language as this, "Thou great Apostle of our profession, I will keep thy sayings in my heart, and take thy statutes as my heritage for ever. I will glory in thy gospel as the perfection of wisdom, and bear my testimony to it as all my salvation. My gracious Lord, I am thy servant; fill me with holy ardour in thy service, and enable me to glorify thee with my body and spirit, which are

thine." He listens with complacency to such language, and will speak peace to your hearts in return.

After the Service.

The act with which Mary accompanied this address calls for your imitation. You are allowed not only to touch the Saviour by the hand of faith and love, but to lean on him; and this is permitted not merely for a moment, but during the whole of your pilgrimage. "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness leaning upon her beloved?" How safe and how happy is the soul while it leans on the Saviour!

Be ready to communicate for the benefit of others your delightful views of your ascended Lord. Mary came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things to her. Your Christian experience may give a devout tendency to the affections and pursuits of your friends, and may be of great use to those who are walking in darkness. It may revive that hope which seems to be giving up the ghost, and bring back that joy which they imagined would never return; it may encourage the dying to trust in the Saviour's mercy, and make the scoffer know assuredly that God hath made that Jesus whom they oppose Lord of all.

Let your garments be always white, and keep yourselves unspotted from the world. Think it not enough to avoid what, in the judgment of the world, would be a blemish to the character, but every thing which the voice of conscience, and the word of God, warn you to shun. Imitate the angels in their ministrations. Give to Jesus, who is the head of the body, the church, the

glory that is due, and on him let the blessings of your hearts come. And condescend to them of low degree. Angels came into the dark abode of death to minister to him ; and you must not refuse to go into the mean dwelling of sick poverty, nor count yourselves degraded in joining the humble mourners who carry the poor saint to his grave. The meaner the place is where charity ministers, the more lovely does she appear in his eyes whose spirit she breathes.

How animating is this scene in the prospect of death ! The presence of the angels in white in the sepulchre attests that its nature is changed. If we view it by the eye of faith, we will perceive kindness in its summons, mercy in its stroke, and a home of peace and rest in its dark abode. When you think of the body in the grave corrupting in its shroud, anticipate the time when angels shall come, and call it forth to immortality. Think not that you are too mean and obscure to hope for a resurrection, for “ of all that the Father hath given him he shall lose nothing, but shall raise it up at the last day.” Then angels shall descend with the trump of God in their hands, and wherever the dead are lying, they shall hear its sound, and shall come forth. And when the dead in Christ arise, “ they shall be caught up to the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we be for ever with the Lord.”

ADDRESS XXXIV.

I JOHN III. 1.

“ Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.”

CHRISTIANS, you are now in your Father's house, and are about to partake of the children's bread, and it becomes you to reflect with devout wonder, and with fervid gratitude, on the kindness of God to you in receiving you into his family. I trust it is your wish to contemplate this marvellous grace in the humble and affectionate spirit of the disciple whom Jesus loved.

How wonderful does this adopting love appear, when you consider your state and character by nature ! We had lost the image, and rebelled against the authority of the Being that formed us, connected ourselves with the family of the devil, and were the slaves of corruption, and the children of wrath. That such creatures should be rescued from destruction was great love, but that God should make them his children is grace that passeth knowledge. You see how unwilling men are to take those into their families whom they consider as beneath them in station, or unworthy of them in character ; but behold God raises the outcast from the fearful pit of guilt and wretchedness to a place in his house, and makes the language of enmity, terror, and despair, to be succeeded by the cry, “ Abba, Father.”

This love will appear wonderful, if we consider the glory of him who adopts. How vast is the distance

betwixt Jehovah and the highest creatures, betwixt the infinite and eternal God, and beings finite, derived, and dependent ! He needed not our services for his glory and happiness, for he could have formed by one effort of his power beings nobler in nature and qualities than men, and have placed them round his throne ; yet did he look with pity on the sinner lying in his blood ; and while he never uttered one expression of mercy to fallen angels, addressed to us this language, “ I will be a Father to you.” “ Seemeth it,” said David, “ a small matter to be son-in-law to a king, seeing I am but a poor man, and lightly esteemed ;” but the most splendid alliance which mortals can form, is not once to be compared with that which connects the children of the dust with the Lord of all.

This love will appear most wonderful, if you consider the manner in which this privilege was procured. Infinite wisdom could alone devise a method for conferring it consistently with the glory of his character, and the demands of his law for vengeance on us ; and the plan it formed was this : that the son of God should assume the likeness of sinful flesh, and the form of a servant, endure the curse which we deserved, and purchase every blessing which could render us holy or happy. Sweet, O Christian, is your Father’s pity, but not one gleam of it visited your suffering Lord. Your afflictions are a Father’s corrections, but the sufferings of Christ were the vindictive strokes of incensed Omnipotence. Your glorious liberty was obtained by his being bound as a criminal, and nailed to the cross ; and he was a homeless wanderer that you might dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. Men, in their folly and caprice, may give what is of great value for the attainment of a trivial object ; but when he, who is infinitely wise and just, sent forth his Son, born of a wo-

man, and made under the law, that we might receive the adoption of children, we may rest assured that this interposition was worthy of his character, and that the end accomplished by it shall be to the praise of the glory of his grace. Behold the value of this blessing in these agonizing sorrows, and in that broken heart of your gracious Saviour, and admire the generosity of his love, who, so far from regarding your adoption with jealousy, or scorning you as a dishonour to his Father's house, suffered "in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy, and unblameable, and unrepensible in his sight."

The privileges of this relation render this adopting love wonderful. Angels share with you in your name, but you have privileges which they cannot possess. Your adoption connects you with the Lord Jesus by ties more close than those by which he is connected with angels. God is yours in a fuller sense than he is theirs. You have a place in the covenant which they cannot occupy, feelings at the communion table which they cannot participate, and a song of praise which they cannot sing. It is true that they have no experience of your sorrows, but they know not the comforts of that mercy which heals the broken-hearted, nor the renovating power of repentance unto life. There is not a blessing in the great salvation which he will deny you, nor a moment of your being which is not marked by his bounty. "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."

How wonderful does this love appear in the manner in which adoption is bestowed. Glorious and blissful as this privilege is, ye were unwilling to receive it, and were altogether unqualified for its duties and enjoyments; but by his Spirit God conquered your aversion, effaced from you the image of Satan, and formed

you to goodness, righteousness, and truth. He implanted in you that love and reverence, that trust and joy, that zeal and benevolence, which characterize his family. These are graces by which God is honoured, and you are blessed ; and he formed them not in a heart that was innocent and uncorrupted, but in one which was alienated from the life of God, bent on the violation of his law, and prone to malice and envy. This blessed change taught you to appreciate the value of Jehovah's smile, to find enjoyment in duties and scenes which to carnal men are irksome and gloomy, and to look forward to eternity for a home.

And is not the perpetuity of this blessing astonishing ? There have been instances in which a father has been induced to disinherit a prodigal son, whom neither kindness, nor menaces, nor corrections could reclaim from utter profligacy, and to expel him from his house and presence ; and you now tremble at the thought that your unworthy conduct may provoke God to cast you off for ever. There were morning stars which fell from the firmament, and sons of God who were cast out of heaven, but such events shall not again occur. The grace of God shall keep you from the excesses of the reprobate, his corrections shall reclaim you from your wanderings, and in his ordinances he shall confirm you in every holy tendency. You are now saying, " Bless me, even me also, O my father ;" and if you ask this for his sake, who was made a curse for you, and in that meek and lowly spirit which would be thankful for the crumbs which fell from his table, it will be granted, for your Father delights in mercy.

After the Service.

It was a memorable answer which the kings of Midian delivered to Gideon, when he asked what man-

ner of men they were whom they slew at Tabor, "As thou art so were they, each one resembled the children of a king." There was a majesty in their form and manner which shed lustre over the obscurity of their condition. And such is the testimony borne to the saints of God even by the consciences of their enemies; for, reluctant as they are to admit their worth, they are compelled to acknowledge it by the force of their convictions, and to declare that God is in them. This acknowledgment they make, though it condemns the cruelty with which they treated them, and though it must be accompanied with the severest censure of their own misconduct by their own hearts. It is made in circumstances too serious for deceit or mockery, and when the suspicion of its being dictated by any sinister purpose is obviously inadmissible.

But what are the characters of the children of the King of heaven, by which you ought to manifest that you belong to that family? Purity is the first which I shall mention. "God is holy in all his ways;" and their hearts, sanctified by the grace of God, are pure in their wishes, affections, and purposes; and their lives, guarded by the controul, and animated by the influence of religion, are consistent and exemplary. As obedient children, let every part of your Father's will be duly regarded by you, and abstain from all appearance of evil. The sanctity of manners which you maintain may be called hypocritical preciseness, or superstitious austerity; but "wisdom is justified of her children."

Benevolence is another feature in their character. God is the Father of mercies; and was their power equal to their wishes, they would make every house of mourning to rejoice. God hath given them a melting heart; and their happiness lies not in amassing wealth,

but in doing good and communicating. While the wicked, by their malice and revenge, shew that they are the children of their father the devil, who was a murderer from the beginning, "love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, that ye may be the children of your father who is in heaven, who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

They resemble the children of a king in majesty. Though many of them are poor and despised in the world, their is such a superiority in their spirit and views to the base and sordid, as proves that they are born from above. Shew, that while your religion inclines you to be meek, and patient, and humble, yet in these virtues there is nought that is abject, cringing, or dastardly. That is a noble mind which poverty cannot crush, and oppression cannot awe, and which maintains the calm dignity of wisdom, integrity, and fortitude, in the most adverse circumstances.

And they are like the children of a king in influence. Such is their power with God, that their prayers are of much avail; in the world, that they are the chariots and horsemen of Israel; and over their own hearts, that, instead of being the sport of passion, they rule over their own spirits. Your influence with God, O Christian, is greatest when your own unworthiness is most deeply felt. He will deny you nothing which his grace in you solicits, or which your happiness requires.

Remember whose image and superscription you once bore. It was the image of the earthly Adam, nay, the likeness of the devil, for his spirit and works were yours. But let your whole soul magnify his name, who stripped off "the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and put on you the new

man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Think not that the transports which you now feel are a sufficient tribute to his adopting love, for it claims your eternal admiration and praise. Cast not away in your future days your wonder on trifles ; but manifest the superior wisdom to which religion hath led you, by despising all that excites the idle curiosity, or the short-lived admiration of the giddy and the carnal, and contemplating with increasing interest scenes which the songs of heaven call great and marvellous. Beware of pride and vain-glory. To consider what you have been, and what you ought to be, will tend much to promote humility. Advance daily in resemblance to God. Let the ministers of religion be able to bear you this testimony, that you are epistles of Christ, transcripts of his doctrine, character, and law, and to rejoice in you as partakers of a divine nature. To see you the sons of God without rebuke is their earnest wish now, and shall be their joy and crown hereafter.

Grow in love and reverence to your heavenly Father. Listen to the voice of the Redeemer from his cross. "O love the Lord all ye his saints." Shall such a Father have the lowest of our reverence, or the coldest of our love? Love your elder brother more, for you have not yet given him all your heart ; and be this moment, and for the future, more entirely his. And remember, that it is by the conformity of his people to his image, that Christ is most highly honoured as the first-born among many brethren. See that you love one another with a pure heart fervently. Ye are one in your Father's heart, in the care of the Redeemer, and in the unity of the Spirit ; and never let pride or envy alienate you from each other. Like

members of one family, take the deepest interest in the welfare of your brethren, behold their sorrows with a brother's pity, and seek their improvement with a brother's solicitude.

Turn away your eyes from beholding vanity. There is not an object in the worldly man's possession which deserves your envy, even though that passion might be indulged with innocence; and, with such a goodly heritage as yours, it is most sinful to repine that aught is withheld, and foolish to be influenced by the denial of it, to attach to it a value which it does not possess.

Ye are now to arise, and to pursue your journey through the wilderness; but rejoice that you are going home, and that your Father is with you. You have seen a child travelling by a father's side, and you know how he soothes and animates him by the voice of kindness and hope when he is impatient and languid, how he points his eyes to the lofty spires or green hills of the place to which he is going, and how he aids him in climbing the mountain, or passing through the mire. And "they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not weary, they shall walk and not faint."

Be of good comfort in the prospect of old age. Then the body of man no more resembles the bloom and strength of youth, than the nakedness of the tree in winter does its luxuriance in the spring; but the beauties of holiness are then as bright as ever. In the old man stooping to the grave, you see the prelude of death and of immortality.

And be of good comfort in the hour of death. It is to your best friends that you are going; and this is the language in which you can speak of your departure; and selfish and impious is the sorrow which would

murmur at your removal, "I go to my Father's house, and to my Saviour's joy." What you were, conscience will often remind you; what you now are, it is the work of gratitude to tell; but what you shall be, faith can only anticipate in part. This is the sum of your happiness, but who can tell all that it contains? "So shall we be for ever with the Lord." This is the hope that enraptures your heart, "As for me I will behold thy face in righteousness, and when I awake I shall be satisfied with thy likeness." Perhaps some of you are ready to say, "O Lord, let me behold thy face in mercy, but to see thee in righteousness can be no joyous hope to me;" but you shall see his justice cordially assenting to your happiness, and prepared to allot and to maintain your inheritance in glory. In the grave corruption shall disfigure you; no trace of what you now are shall be left in the consuming flesh, and in the crumbling bones; but Christ shall fashion your vile bodies like to his own glorious body, and you shall reign with him in life for ever. Amen.

ADDRESS XXXV.

I PETER I. 8.

"Whom having not seen, ye love."

WE are so much accustomed to the influence of sensible objects, that some rashly conclude that it is impossible to love one whom we have never seen, and are disposed to class affection to an invisible Saviour among the reveries of enthusiasm. But there are other modes

of exhibiting the worth of an object as striking as its actual presence. It is not so much the external form of an object which excites regard, as the amiable qualities which it indicates. It is the benignity which softens the features, the sympathy which moistens the eye, and the wisdom which flows from the lips, by which our hearts are touched; and a most vivid impression of those qualities may be produced on those who have never seen their possessors, by the statements of those who have been associated with them.

When we go into the house of affliction, and are told of one whose liberality has supplied their wants, and whose skilful exertions have redeemed their lives from destruction, we do not remain cold and indifferent at the recital, because we have not seen the generous visitant. Our hearts swell at once with admiration of his goodness, and join in the blessings which are invoked on him by those who were ready to perish. When we survey the pillars which have been reared to commemorate the brave who have won the liberty, or the memorials of the genius which has adorned the literature of our country, we feel a degree of attachment to such characters as strong as ever was felt by any among whom they lived. The prejudices of party, and the surmises of envy, which so often darken the lustre of living merit, seldom spread a shade over the illustrious dead. And shall it be deemed impossible for us to love the Lord Jesus Christ, of the excellencies of whose character we have such an affecting record in the sacred history, written by men who saw his glory? They thus describe the object which they had in view in these details, "These things which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us, that your hearts may glow with feelings akin to ours."

I may add, that there are testimonies of regard to our interests, which may excite strong affection, though we have never seen the benefactor from whom they proceed. It is not even necessary that he live in the same country, or the same age with us. It is enough that we behold in his bounty a picture of his heart. We feel it as a circumstance which strengthens our attachment to a distant benefactor, that, surrounded by objects calling for his kindness, he honoured us with the pledges of his regard.

The father who dies while his child is too young to recognize him, and who, before he departs, leaves his counsels for his direction, makes every provision in his power for his comfort, and orders a valuable pledge of his regard to be given to him when he arrives at maturity, is thought of by that son with affectionate veneration. These counsels strike him as if he heard them from a father's lips, and that pledge affects him as if he received it from a father's hand. And are not we surrounded with the tokens of our Saviour's regard to our interests? The ordinances of religion are stored with his blessings, and the earth is full of his mercy.

I trust I can appeal to you, Christians, and say, "Him having not seen, ye love." His excellence is such as to claim your best affection. History exhibits many estimable characters, fancy hath drawn many striking pictures of eminent worth, and heaven contains many bright angels and saints, made perfect; but in all things Christ hath the pre-eminence. As a divine Being he possesses all the brightness of the Father's glory, all the wisdom of an infinite understanding, all the might of omnipotence, all the beauty of underived excellence, and all the benignity of everlasting love. As man, how amiable is he in the

beneficence of his life, the humility of his spirit, and the gentleness of his manners, in the condescension which counted no abasement too low, and in the patience which deemed no suffering too severe for the happiness of the wretched ! And as Mediator, he possesses every excellence to merit the Father's confidence, to consummate the plans of mercy, and to claim the sinner's trust.

In eminent characters among men, there is generally one excellence for which they are distinguished ; and when you examine their other qualities you find them by no means superior to those of others ; but the various excellencies of Jesus shine with the fullest glory.

In men, we do not expect to find a combination of opposite excellencies. The hardiness of the bold and the determined, is seldom associated with the gentleness and softness of the mild and the tender-hearted ; but in Jesus the beauty of holiness is mingled with candour and pity, the brightest majesty with the softest meekness, and the strictest justice with the richest grace. In the brightest human characters there is some defect ; but in the Sun of Righteousness there is no spot, in the pearl of great price there is no flaw, and in the rose of Sharon there is no thorn.

Many characters strike only at first. The gloss of novelty gives a power of attraction to many things which have no solid worth, and the language of disappointment and disgust soon succeeds that of wonder and ecstasy ; but the more Jesus is known the more he is loved. In the praise of other characters we suppose that flattery is often mingled ; but, amidst all that is said of Jesus, the heart is still conscious of the

inadequacy of the description, and that the theme surpasses the power of language.

Now, Christians, what think ye of the Saviour? An unsanctified mind cannot conceive his glory, and it cannot be the delight of a carnal heart. Once you saw no form nor comeliness in him, but your eyes were opened, and your hearts were purified by his Spirit; and since that happy change, you have been convinced that his excellence is supreme and matchless, and you feel that in studying, admiring, and imitating it, you could find your eternal felicity.

But in what Christ hath done for you, he also claims your love; and it is the consideration of what he hath done for us, which encourages us to cling to him as our friend. And let it not be said that this is a selfish principle; for it is the benefactor's heart which love regards; and it is the kindness of the Saviour, apparent in what he did, and in what he gives, which engages our affection. Meditate on the glory and felicity from which he descended, on the humiliation to which he stooped, and the anguish to which he submitted for you. Meditate on the melting sympathy of his heart, and the unwearied earnestness of his prayers; on redemption by his blood, sanctification and comfort by his Spirit, victory by his grace, and eternal life by his righteousness, and you will feel how much you owe him. And when you consider this kindness as manifested to creatures who deserved nought **but** abhorrence and indignation, it will heighten your grateful wonder. I trust your hearts are now magnifying him as the best of beings, and as the only Saviour. Memory, O blessed Jesus, will select thy goodness for its tenderest recollection, and gratitude, thy favours for its sweetest theme. The most valued

of my friends shall be placed at thy feet, and the throne of my heart shall be occupied by thee for ever.

After the Service.

When I think on the baseness of the human heart, I am astonished that Jesus should ask its love, and do so much to gain it. He is the object of supreme affection to all the angels in heaven, yet doth he cast his eye on human beings, and say to them, "give me thine heart." Fix your eyes on a suffering Redeemer, and tell me why that heart groans, and why it is broken? It is to win yours. Our love cannot add to his happiness, but he requires it because it constitutes our own. Happy is he who is now saying, "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength;" and blessed shall he be who is attempting to say it, though with a trembling heart, and with a faltering tongue, for "the bruised reed he will not break, and the smoking flax he will not quench, till he bring forth judgment unto victory." The communion table is a place for re-animating languid affection, as well as for strengthening weak faith. Here the fire of heaven descends, not to destroy, but to fill the cold and dark heart with love and gladness. That fire has come down, and is consuming your corruptions and your fears, and making your hearts right in the sight of God.

Express your love to him in the language of adoration and praise. To the most splendid crown which the earth could present to him he prefers the blessings of those who are ready to perish. Sacrifice every corruption before him, consecrate to him every talent, and devote to him every moment.

Remember the words of your Saviour, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Let your love be displayed in the cheerfulness of your obedience, and in your compliance with those precepts which seem the hardest sayings to flesh and blood. And let your obedience be constant. Love is not a principle which operates in occasional bursts of rapture, which are succeeded by long periods of languor and indolence; but it acts with a steady influence on the heart and conduct.

Manifest your attachment to Jesus by love to the brethren. How is it that we shew our attachment to a friend who is gone? It is by kindness to his connections, by aiding them, if they are helpless, guiding them by our advice, and redressing their wrongs, if they are oppressed. And it is by similar acts to the disciples, that we must show our love to their Master and ours. This is the grand distinction of Christian beneficence, that it is done for the sake of Jesus. It is love to Christ which has prompted those efforts of mercy by which so much misery has been removed, and so much happiness imparted. It hath raised up fathers for the orphan, provided an asylum for the outcast, brightened the gloom of the prisoner, and furnished the means of instruction to those "who were perishing for lack of knowledge." And what motive can be so animating to such conduct as this? "In as much as ye did it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." Consider the case of the poor, and be willing to distribute, and ready to communicate. The portion which is sent from your meals to poor neighbours, and the clothing which you give them, will be no loss to you, and will be a great comfort to them.

Adhere stedfastly and zealously to the cause of

your Saviour. The contempt which is cast on those whom we love, and the injuries which are done to them, often affect us more than if we ourselves were their objects. When they are respected and flourishing, the heart swells with exultation; and it tends to reconcile us to neglect and to hardships that they are happy. Thus you must feel with regard to your Saviour. Let it be your prayer that every heart may love him supremely, that every pursuit may point to his glory, and that every tongue may proclaim his praise. With Christ on the throne, the pious man can welcome the dust, and is contented to be nothing where his Lord is all. In opposition to the blasphemy which profanes his name, the heresy which depreciates his merits, the pride which scorns his grace, and the enmity which impedes the spread of truth and virtue, praise ye the Lord, glory in his cross, and labour to promote the knowledge and the practice of religion.

Let young disciples beware lest their love wax cold. You think this is impossible, but it has been the case with too many. Shall the kindness of your youth, and the love of your espousals be all that can be said of your religion when you come to die? Let it be followed by the uniform piety of every future period; and let there never be reason to complain of you that you have not realized the promise of your early days, and that "you have left your first love." Let those in middle life beware of the love of the world. Let not its cares overcharge the heart, or impede its devout movements, and let not its intercourse unfit you for those exercises which are so necessary to cherish holy feeling. And let the aged be lively and ardent in pious affection. It is truly delightful to see the dim eye glistening at the praise of Jesus, and the failing heart swelling with the fervour of devotion.

Finally, Carry the love of Christ with you wherever you go. In prosperity it will melt the heart and open the hand; in the scene of strife and debate, it will maintain a generous forbearance, and prompt a soft answer; in the season of affliction, it will make you patient and thankful, and lift the thoughts from the pain that is suffered, and the property that is lost, to Jesus as the soul's rest and portion; in the house of mourning, it will elevate the affections from the corse inclosed in its coffin, or corrupting in its grave, to a living Redeemer on high; and in the hour of death, it will lessen the pang with which you separate from all that is dear to you on earth, and make you willing to be absent from the body and present with the Lord. This will be the grand principle which will actuate the blessed when repentance shall weep, patience shall suffer, and faith and hope shall anticipate no more. And when you shall see your Lord as he is, your love to him shall attain a strength, and a tenderness more suited than what it at present has, to the worth, and the kindness of the Lamb that was slain. "Let us go on to perfection."

ADDRESS XXXVI.

I PETER I. 8.

"In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

How various are the feelings of which our blessed Saviour is the object! The emotions excited by any human being must be very limited, from the narrow-

ness of his powers, and the imperfections which adhere to his best qualities; but such are the excellencies, and such is the influence of our Redeemer, that to him every principal of the renovated heart is directed, and finds in him an appropriate object. The man who is the object of our dread we can seldom regard with confidence and hope; and from the friend whom we love as our own souls, our bitterest vexations sometimes arise. Gratitude to an earthly benefactor is often attended with painful sensations arising from the inferiority which is connected with the receipt of favours, and from our inability to make a suitable return. But dependence on Christ is that state of mind in which the saint enjoys the most pleasing tranquillity; that majesty of his which excites so much awe, confirms his trust in a power before which all created might is less than nothing, and love to his name, is attended with joy unspeakable and full of glory. If there is a pang felt in the exercise of this love, it is because it is so inadequate to its glorious object, and so far beneath what the good man would wish it to be.

I trust that I may thus address you, "ye are the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh."

Christians rejoice in the excellencies of their Saviour. Excellence produces joy in a virtuous mind, even where its display yields no personal advantage. The integrity which no prospect of gain can pervert, and no dread of loss can shake, the charity which opens its hand with wisdom, the purity which is superior to all the fascinations of sinful pleasure, and the fortitude which glories in tribulation, are contemplated with delight by the good, whether they are exhibited in real life, or in the page of history. This delight is always

heightened when we have any connection with its object. If it is the excellence of a relative with whom nature hath made us one, of a benefactor who hath honoured us with his notice, or of a friend whom we dearly love, we view it with exultation. Often hath the virtuous conduct of such a connection gladdened the aged amid the gloom and languor of solitude and infirmity.

But the excellencies of your Saviour are superior to all that man ever possessed, or fancy ever sketched. The pages of Scripture, and the songs of the blessed, are filled with his praise, who is the image of the invisible God. His character is adorned by all the beauties of holiness, his goodness is unwearied in blessing, and his heart, though he is on the summit of glory and felicity, is touched with a feeling of our infirmities and sorrows. Your minds have been taught to approve the things which are more excellent; you contemplate these qualities of your Lord with a high degree of pleasure; and when the consciousness of your own depravity, and of the wickedness which prevails around you, fills you with horror, you feel, in looking unto Jesus, as a man does in turning from an object loathsome with disease, to one blooming in health and beauty. Your interest in Jesus heightens your delight; for his wisdom is pledged for your guidance, and his power for your support: to his purity you are destined to be conformed; and in his goodness and mercy you can trust for the supply of every want, and the relief of every sorrow.

Ye ought to rejoice too in the wonders which he hath wrought for you. Deliverance from great evils, and this accomplished in a manner which displays the courage or skill of the deliverer in a striking light, are celebrated with rapturous joy. When David was re-

turning from the slaughter of the Philistines, the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music; and they answered one another as they played, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." But we must, with a much higher joy, contemplate him who hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, from the tyranny of Satan, from the bondage of corruption, and from the wrath to come, not merely by putting his life in jeopardy, but by the sacrifice of himself in a manner marked by peculiar agony.

The rapture felt by delivered nations is generally most vivid at first, while the remembrance of the miseries under which they groaned is most poignant. In the course of years the interest decays, or is supplanted by some new incident. But though so many hundred years have elapsed since our redemption was effected, it is as much adapted to excite joy as when it was achieved. Its importance cannot sink in the lapse of time. The ordinance of the Lord's Supper sets forth Christ before our eyes evidently crucified; and such is the power of faith that it brings objects most distant from the past as well as from the future, and exhibits them before us in their most powerful attractions. I may add, that the application of this redemption to you is but of yesterday, and feeling, as you do at this moment, the efficacy of his redeeming blood, you are ready to exclaim, "Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it, break forth into singing ye mountains, O forest, and every tree that is therein, for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel."

The relations which your Lord sustains to you call for your joy. A peculiar pleasure is felt in a near relation to objects whose excellent qualities can render

it honourable or advantageous ; and high must be the joy which is felt in union to Him who is the first and the last in relations so intimate and tender. He is the husband of his church ; and delightful is the tenderness of his regard, your community of interest with him, and the indissoluble nature of this relation. He is the "friend that sticketh closer than a brother ;" and ye have, I trust, the pleasing consciousness of his fidelity to your interests, and his tender sympathy in all your woes. He is your advocate with the Father, who is ever attentive to your concerns, and ever solicitous for your welfare ; and while he beholds all things under his sway, he disdains not to plead the cause of the poor and the needy. He is the everlasting Father, and how sweet is it to mark his care, and to enjoy his liberality ; to receive the testimonies of his approbation, and to feel in that kind embrace with which he welcomes us back from our wanderings, that he is pacified to us for all that we have done !

On topics so delightful as these let your thoughts now dwell. "My meditation of him shall be sweet, and I will be glad in the Lord. Eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart. Rejoice in the Lord ye righteous, and again I say rejoice."

After the Service.

"Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." In communion with Jesus a joy is felt which no earthly advantage can yield, and which no worldly evil can impair. It is only the man who tastes that the Lord is gracious who can form any idea of the tenderness of his language, or the kindness of his smile. In his presence the good man would find no gloom in

a prison, no loneliness in a desert, and no terrors in death. The vows and engagements you have made to your Lord in this service, will give the faithful joy on reflection. It is said that "all Israel sware to the Lord with a loud voice, and with shouting, with trumpets and cornets, and all Judah rejoiced at the oath, for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire." The consciousness of sincerity in this service, of that divine influence by which we were stirred up to magnify and bless him, and of God's acceptance of our homage, must be highly pleasing. "Thou hast put gladness in my heart more than the wicked have in the time when their corn and wine abound."

Some of you perhaps are saying, "Oh, that I could rejoice in these views of Christ; but when I attempt it, the grand and awful representations of him in Scripture rush into my mind, and fill me with dismay." But in these representations a strong faith can discern reasons for joy. He is the King of kings; but he is also the Prince of peace. He is the mighty God; but he is able to save to the uttermost. His vesture is dyed in blood; but it is the blood of your enemies. And when he speaks to you in threatenings, it is to warn you of dangers of which you are unconscious, and to induce you to abide in the refuge in which he hath placed you.

Rejoice in your Lord's offices. His teaching discloses the wonders of God's love, brightens the dark ways of Providence, and makes the benighted mind to know wisdom. Rejoice in his sacrifice, for it is the triumph of his love, the conquest of your enemies, and the price of your salvation. And rejoice in his reign, for his yoke is easy, his sceptre is a sceptre of righteousness, and his throne is a throne of grace.

Rejoice in the promises which he has made to you. The most part of mankind feel more joy in hope than in possession; place before them a good which they deem valuable, and let the promise of it be worthy of their trust, and they will feel a joy in the anticipation which will make the most arduous efforts for its attainment seem light. And when you think on the exceeding great and precious promises which your Saviour hath sealed with his blood, you will rejoice exceedingly. In these promises your comfort and safety are secured in death and judgment. These are events, the idea of which saddens the gayest hours of the wicked, and against these terrors presumption and infidelity furnish a poor defence. Jesus promises you a peace in death which the king of terrors cannot shake, and a triumph in judgment amidst the utter confusion of ungodly men. He promises you a happiness on high through eternity, in which you shall find gratification to all your wishes, and the glorious result of all that your Lord did for you on earth and in heaven.

How noble are the qualities of your joy! Some have felt it to such a degree that they could not express it. This is the case with various emotions. Silence on such occasions is a far more striking and certain indication of the vehemence of the emotion than the strongest language which the lips can employ. But no language can convey a full idea of its power and sweetness. The compass of human language is wonderful. It can present the most splendid scenes of earthly pomp and enterprise before the imagination, with all the liveliness and strength of reality; but it cannot exhibit in its due extent the peace which passeth understanding, and the joy with which the stranger doth not intermeddle. It is only the language of heaven which will

be adequate to describe what the presence of Christ inspires, and what the spiritually-minded feel.

Your joy is glorious in its nature. I will not compare it with the joy of the wicked man in sin, which is vile and detestable; nor with that of the worldling in his indulgencies, which is mean and grovelling. But compare it with the joy which is felt in the acquisition of knowledge, or the endearments of friendship, and, behold its superiority. It does not arise from the mere workings of natural feeling in the heart, but is the fruit of the Divine Spirit,—it is akin to the delight in God which is felt by angels and archangels.

How glorious is the influence of this joy! Carnal joy often discovers itself in excesses of folly, it so softens the heart as to unfit it for any effort of self-denial, or any exertion that is laborious and troublesome, and renders it peculiarly susceptible of the influence of temptations to pride and sensuality. But this joy makes the heart contemn every carnal allurements, and gives it such vigour and such courage, that it will welcome the most difficult duty, and sustain the severest trial.

It detracts much from the value of any object when it is transient in its nature; and such is the character of all carnal joy. “The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment.” It does not even last till death, for the most frivolous incident will mar it, and continued indulgence produces disgust. But though the joy of the saint may not possess at all times the same degree of vigour, he is at no time left comfortless. Wonderful is the power of that joy, which the winter of adversity cannot wither, nor the evil days of age destroy. And your joy shall be eternal as its object. It is the beginning of

the felicity which will be felt when the glory of Immanuel shall be seen by you unveiled, when in the city of the living God, you shall bear a part in the song of the Lamb, when your love shall be purified from every fear, and your bliss be placed beyond the reach of change or termination.

Beware of every thing which may tend to mar your joy. Guard against unbelief, for this will impede your joy, by questioning the excellence of its object, or your interest in it; and against a worldly spirit, for this will make you disrelish things spiritual and heavenly. Neglect no duty, for every such omission will give rise to many painful reflections; and never yield to temptation to sin, for this will fill you with remorse and fear. Shew to all around that religion is not as the wicked assert, a series of gloom and sadness, of outward austerities, and inward struggles, mingled only with a few bursts of enthusiastic ecstasy, but that it makes you happy in all circumstances. Invite them to taste and see that God is good, and while in trying whether the wicked are happy they incur much guilt, and may receive much injury, in going with you they will enter into rest.

Arise from this ordinance, and go on your way rejoicing, as the Ethiopian convert did, when "baptized into Christ;" and labour to comfort others with these consolations with which you are comforted of God. "Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions to them for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy unto our Lord; neither be ye sorry, for the joy of the Lord is your strength. Rejoice evermore."

ADDRESS XXXVII.

LUKE XXIII. 46.

“ And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit; and, having said thus, he gave up the ghost.”

SUCH were the last words which our Lord uttered, and such was the last act which he performed on the cross. You now behold a life marked by all that is excellent and useful, closed in a manner worthy of such a course. The sun setting in a sky adorned with clouds beautiful in form and colour, is an object which it is pleasing to contemplate; the warrior expiring in the field of blood, deeply interests the ardent mind of the brave; and the saints rejoicing in hope in their last hour, are beheld with wonder and love by the pious. But here we behold the Son of Righteousness setting, whose glory covers the heavens, the Conqueror of the powers of darkness sinking into rest in the arms of victory, and the King of Saints, shewing by his example, how good men should die.

Our Lord commended his spirit into his Father's hand, and gave up the ghost to complete the sacrifice which he was offering for sin. Death was the penalty threatened in the law, and which the Surety of man must endure. Jesus knew that his last moment was now come, and as he had offered to his Father all the previous parts of his sufferings, he now presented to him their solemn close. On the altar of God the sa-

crifice had bled, and there it dies. Were a respite from death offered to the most part of men after they have endured severe agony for hours, it would be gladly accepted. The last shock is more frightful to nature than all the previous gloom, pain, and anxiety of a sick-bed ; but that generous love which brought Christ to this hour sustained him to its close, and no consideration could induce him to come down from the cross, and leave his work unfinished.

Christ commended his spirit into his Father's hands, that he might make it happy with himself during its separation from the body, and re-unite both parts of his nature in the resurrection. The idea of the separation of soul and body is painful to nature, and the struggles arising from their appetites and corrupt tendencies, which weaken the attachment of the spirits of good men to their bodies, could not operate on the soul of our Lord. But this was his hope, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in a state of separation from the body, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life. In thy presence there is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand there are pleasures evermore." He believed that his spirit would rest in the bosom of that Father, the power of whose anger he had now felt, and that his descent into Joseph's sepulchre would be the conquest of the grave. He trusted that his spirit would return to a body powerful, incorruptible, and immortal. His soul and body had hitherto been companions in pain and toil, but hereafter they would be associated in rest and joy. All the perfections of God warranted this hope. His justice was to receive an answer to its last demand in the separation of soul and body, and it would require their re-union, which the power of Jehovah could easily effect. And to a Son so dear, and so worthy, what could

the Father of mercies refuse ! He had assured him of this in a variety of promises ; and Jesus knew that none of his words could pass away.

But our Lord commended his spirit into his Father's hands, as an example to his people. The soul is the chief care of the good in dying. They can leave the body to friends and neighbours to give it a decent burial ; their worldly possessions they resign to those who shall succeed them ; and with regard to relatives, however helpless, they hope that the kindness of the humane, and the care of Providence, will plead for the fatherless, but they feel many anxieties about the immortal spirit. They see guilt on it more than sufficient to crush it into the lowest hell ; evil spirits they know are meeting and plotting to drag it down to destruction ; and though good angels care for their souls, yet heaven is not theirs, and they can procure admission to none. But rejoice that Christ hath secured your reception to glory, and there is nought that is stern, or repulsive, in the voice or countenance of the Lord of that place ; he will receive the spirit to the highest blessings of his love, and to employment which, of itself, would constitute a heaven. Your Lord hath authorised you to expect this welcome, and to express your hope of it in his own language. Many good men have used these words when they were dying, and are now blessing him in heaven for that everlasting consolation, and that good hope with which they inspired them in their last hour. And to thy honour, O blessed Jesus, we will now say, that all that is pleasing in life thou affordest and heightenest, and that in thee, we will trust for comfort and safety, and victory in death.

Is Jesus precious to you, Christians, in these views of his death ? If we love the man whose influence secures us a safe passage through difficulties and dangers, we

ought certainly to yield the best affections of our hearts to him who hath made death a translation to a Father and to a home. What are you willing to give up to him who for your sakes yielded up the ghost? Can you say, I will renounce every thing but the grace he hath given me? The dearest connexion, and the most valued possession shall be surrendered at his call. What think ye of his atoning death? To this question I hope you can thus reply: So much do I value it, that I have fixed on it my dependence for eternity. I glory in it for the redemption it obtained, for the peace which it made, and for the graces which it displayed. It is the common centre of faith, love, and joy to Christians on earth, and of admiration and triumph to spirits in glory. And while you now commemorate that death, may the Eternal Father, to whom it was an offering and a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour, accept, strengthen, and maintain your delight and your confidence in the cross of his Son.

After the Service.

It is worthy of notice, that the language in which Christ commended his soul into his Father's hands was that of David, whose Son, and whose Lord he was; and thus he hath recommended to us the petitions of good men, which are recorded in Scripture, to be used in devotion, and especially in the supplications of the dying. Were I to complain of any want in the narratives of the last hours of some good men, it would be of the language of Scripture. These words of eternal life must have a sweetness and power to the heart of the man that utters them, and of those that hear them, which none of the expressions of human wisdom or

genius can possess. In using the language of Scripture, let your application of it be judicious and suitable, and let it be done with the reverence which is due to that word which God hath magnified above all his name.

It is also worthy of our attention, that our Lord did this with a loud voice. His expressions of relation to God had been derided by his enemies; but, to shew that he had made no claim to which he was not fully entitled, he committed his soul to his Father with a voice which might reach the surrounding multitude, and strike insolence and cruelty dumb. The eternal Father heard him with approbation and delight, and a voice from the excellent glory reached the heart of the expiring sufferer, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

It is very remarkable that our Lord, in using these words of David, begins them in a manner which shews his affection to God, and employs the term "Father," which is not to be found in the verse of the Psalm to which he refers. His father's wrath had overwhelmed him with anguish, and in him he had seen an avenging Judge, yet he calls him by this most endearing name, and commits the spirit which he had tried so severely into his hands. We find it difficult, in the hour of God's anger against us, to address him in the language of hope and love, and imagine that the frowns of his face, and the blows of his rod, are intended to repress it; but Christ's affection to his Father could not be shaken by all the horrors of Calvary. Satan laboured to suggest to him many hard thoughts of God, but they were expelled instantly from that heart in which piety had the undivided throne, and which looked for its rest, rewards and bliss, in God alone, and in him for ever. In the spirit of your Lord, call Jehovah your Father,

even when he speaks roughly to you, and demands from you your dearest comforts, and say, " Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

No sooner had our Lord uttered these words than he gave up the ghost. Man, in dying, obeys the law of his nature, and the spirit, thus required of him, he can no longer retain: but Christ had power to lay down his life. Death was in him an act of sovereignty, and not the sinking of exhausted nature. The loudness of his last cry shewed the strength of the vital principle. It was not necessary that life should be protracted any longer, for every prediction about his sufferings had been fulfilled, and it only remained for him to lay it down for us, and this he did with generous promptitude at the appointed moment.

O ye, from whom life must be torn as it were by violence, and who testify your reluctance to die by your sobs, and cries, and vows, behold Jesus yielding it up while he had power to retain it, and you will feel ashamed to struggle. And let those who are tempted to take away their own lives, in the agony of disappointed passion, or utter despair, look to Jesus enduring the cross, and their gloom will be scattered, and their fatal purposes repressed.

Keep your hearts with all diligence, for with no confidence can you commend to God when you are dying, a spirit which anger has inflamed, unchastity has defiled, or avarice hath engrossed? Let meekness keep them in perfect peace, let temperance guard them from every sensual desire, and charity influence them with every feeling of kindness. When anger rises, check it by thinking on the long suffering of your Lord; when corruption is excited, repress it by crucifying the flesh; and when the world solicits, look from it to the grave and to heaven.

Be frequent in prayer. It was a favourite exercise of your Lord, and with it his life was closed. Many have begun to pray at the approach of death. It hath wrung prayers from the lips of the proudest blasphemer; but we must give ourselves to prayer through life, if we wish to call on God with comfort when we die. Nothing will strengthen for duty, dispose for felicity, or prepare for affliction like prayer.

“Commit the keeping of your souls to God in well doing, as to a faithful Creator.” An indolent, selfish devotion, which consults only its own indulgence, or which yields nothing but good words, and fair speeches, is an abomination in his sight. While your lips utter the voice of prayer, and your hearts feel the emotions of affectionate confidence, be active in good works. If the wicked are so eager and determined in the service of Satan, it will be most disgraceful to you, if you become languid and careless in the work of the Lord.

Anticipate death with the feelings which become Christians. How easy is that bed of death which hath the gracious promise of Jesus for its pillow, and how happy is the man to whom the grave is the house of a Father! And if Jesus said, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,” amidst the severest agony of body and mind, you cannot pretend that you are in circumstances in which you cannot express it. Your last throb, your last look, and your last words, are due, not to relatives, however valuable. The last throb of your hearts should be produced by love to Christ, and by a desire to be with him; your last look must be to his cross, and your last words should be, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”

Finally, Meditate on those prayers which he addresses to his Father in your behalf, “Holy Father, keep through thine own name, those whom thou hast

given me." With such a protector none can harm you. "I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." With such a companion to soothe, and cheer you, you need fear no evil. And this is the language in which he pleads for your admission to heaven, "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am." O blessed hope! Its influence shall make solitude pleasing, and death desirable. "And now I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified."

ADDRESS XXXVIII.

MATTH. XXVIII. 5.

"And the angel answered, and said unto the woman, Fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified."

THESE are the words with which the angel calmed the minds of the pious women who had come to pay the last offices of respect to our Lord's body. When they beheld the consternation of the keepers, the glory of the heavenly messenger, and the tomb of Jesus open, they were filled with anxiety and dismay. While the Roman guards were left to the gloomy suggestions of their own minds, the angel addressed these disciples in language kind and animating; and the view

which he gives of their exercise, and the encouragement which he suggests to them, are admirably adapted for the instruction and comfort of the devout communicant.

These persons sought our Lord with affection. The love which we bear to our friends express itself in a variety of ways, after their departure. We mourn beside their dust, feel a melancholy pleasure in the tender recollections which that spot cherishes, and anticipate the time when the same turf or stone shall cover us. These pious women came to our Saviour's tomb with costly spices and ointments, after the custom of the east, to anoint his body, and to scatter over the sepulchre. Their thoughts, their affection, and their happiness, had gone down with him to the grave; and the corse of their dearest friend had more power to attract them than all that the land of the living contained.

Christians, you seek not a dead, but a living Saviour. You seek him not in the house of silence, but in the temple which he fills with his glory. You have not come to cast a last look on his countenance, once so amiable, but now so ghastly, or to anoint him with spices, but to beseech him to cause his face to shine upon you, and to receive "an unction from the Holy One." You are influenced by pious attachment, I trust, in thus seeking him, and when you meet him, and hold him by the feet, or grasp the hem of his garment, you will be able to say, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee."

Courage was conspicuous in the conduct of these disciples. They knew that the followers of our Lord were at that time the objects of suspicion, and had reason to dread the malice and power of his enemies, yet this did not deter them from shewing a deep interest in his fate. They knew also that the tomb was

surrounded by Roman soldiers, and it was probable, that instead of being allowed to pay their tribute of affection unmolested, they would be repulsed with rudeness and barbarity. Besides, the morning was only beginning to dawn, and they were much less likely to meet with protection from the ill-usage of the base, than if the day had been advanced. I may add, that there is something in the sight of a dead body, and of the interior of a sepulchre, which awakens feelings of horror; yet attachment raised them superior to these causes of fear, and steeled their hearts with courage.

You have not such dangers to brave in your duty; but there are many things which require you to arm yourselves with their mind. The corruptions of the heart will throw obstacles in your way; and some have had to break through the opposition of friends and relatives in seeking Jesus, in places against which they were irritated by the bigotry and prejudice, or in duties which impiety led them to contemn. Your spiritual enemies will try to seduce your hearts from the Saviour, by their allurements; and if these do not succeed, they will bring former sins to remembrance, to fill you with terror; they will suggest to your minds such thoughts as will harass or shock you, and alarm you with the idea of your eating and drinking damnation to yourselves; but none of these things must move you, and you must go on in the strength of the Lord God.

How zealous were these disciples! Many in their situation would have thought that they had sufficiently proved their zeal, by witnessing his crucifixion, where none of the apostles were present save John; that Joseph and Nicodemus had done the body of our Lord all necessary honour; and that, if more was requisite,

the disciples should come forward and shew their repentance for their base desertion. But instead of reasoning in this manner, they procured a large quantity of spices and ointments, and instead of waiting till the disciples came to accompany them, or till they were apprised that they might go forward in safety, when the Sabbath was ended, they set out with eagerness on this labour of love.

In this spirit you must seek the honour of your Lord. Imagine it not an excuse for sloth on your part, that others are careless. Shall your Master's honour lie in the dust, because those who should raise it put not forth their hands, and because those who should plead for it are silent? This is an opportunity for you to show that you have another spirit in you, and that you are determined to follow the Lord fully.

You cannot imagine that sufficient honours are done to his name, or that sufficient efforts are made in his cause. That name is exalted above all blessing and praise, and that cause deserves the utmost energies of every creature. Think not that amidst the acclamations of thousands, your hosannahs will be dispensed with, and that amidst the gold of the wealthy in his treasury he will not look for your mite, for he will make inquiry after the offering of the poor, and regard the sigh of the feeble minded.

These disciples sought him with sorrow. Memory was employed in setting before them the excellencies of the friend they had lost, and the sufferings in which he had expired, and, forgetting his promises of his resurrection, they said in the despondency of their hearts, "I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord, in the land of the living." They had spent a mournful Sabbath; and during the two dreadful nights which had passed since Jesus died, they had watered their couch with

their tears. This sorrow was permitted to overwhelm them, that their meeting with our Saviour after his resurrection might be more exquisitely tender and pleasing.

You have not their causes of sorrow ; but you have reason to mourn that you are so unprepared to meet him, that you are seeking him so coldly, and that your past conduct has been such as to suggest the most painful fears that Jesus will not draw near you. Godly sorrow is as pleasing to Christ as the rapture of angels ; and at his table he will relieve the heart that is oppressed with this grief. If ye have come to his table with this sorrow ye shall return with peace. To feel his hand wiping away our tears, to hear his voice assuring us of forgiveness, and to find his comforts gladdening our souls, must yield a pleasure which can only be exceeded in the acquittal of judgment, and in the blessedness of heaven.

After the Service.

Christians, your affectionate inquiries after your Lord are marked in heaven. Jesus knows the true character and motives of his worshippers. The men of the world may suppose that your services are but an empty form, and that your hearts are as much strangers to the feelings of devotion as theirs ; but you can appeal from censure so uncharitable and so presumptuous, to him who searches the heart, and say, " with my soul have I desired thee in the night season, and with my spirit within me I have sought thee early." He knows your secret struggles with corrupt principles, your devout wishes and holy purposes, and he will aid you in mortifying the deeds of the body, and cherish every virtuous emotion.

But consider that your languid feelings, and your backsliding in heart must be known to him also, and the intimation of this will cover you with confusion. Happy is he to whom the Redeemer is not called to say, "when thou wast on the bed of sloth, and in the scene of folly, I saw thee;" and more happy still is he whom he can address thus, "when thou wast at my cross washing thy robes in my blood, and when thou wast in the scene of active duty, I beheld thee." Enthusiasts may mistake the phantom which is formed by their own fancy for a messenger from heaven; but the pious are under no delusion when they say, "God Almighty met with me, and blessed me."

Ye who have been seeking Jesus who was crucified, have no cause for fear. What is it that terrifies you in the exercises of the sanctuary? Is it the glory to which Jesus is now raised? His heart is the same on the throne as on the cross. The mercy which shed so sweet a lustre round the cross, is now one of the bright ornaments of his throne. Is it the opposition of your enemies that alarms you? They were vanquished when your Lord was crucified; and by the blood of the Lamb you shall be more than conquerors. Is it the consciousness of guilt that troubles you? He will not punish you for that for which he bled and died. Are you afraid that the folly, and the inconstancy of your hearts, will induce him to abandon you? Such fears show that you are jealous of yourselves; but there is virtue in the cross to enlighten you in all wisdom, and to confirm you in all goodness. Do you fear that the gloom on your spirits, in consequence of afflicting dispensations, will unfit you for his service? "The way of the Lord is strength to the upright." And do the terrors of death and judgment agitate you? Behold in Jesus, who was crucified, a hope for the one, which

shall not make you ashamed, and a plea for the other, which shall not fail you.

Meditate on the assurances with which the Scripture abounds of God's care and mercy to them that seek him. "The meek shall eat, and be satisfied; they shall praise the Lord that seek him; your hearts shall live for ever. They that seek the Lord shall want nothing that is good." I do not say that you shall want nothing which you deem good; for fancy is often misled, and the humours of the heart are foolish and wayward; but you shall be denied nothing which God sees to be necessary to your welfare.

If, as I trust is the case, you have met with the Saviour whom you sought at his table, consider that this is a privilege of which you are altogether unworthy, and provoke him not to leave you by a presumptuous and wandering heart. If other objects solicit you to pursue them, let it be seen that you are too happy with your Lord to seek for felicity any where else. Christ's approbation is your crown, his law is your delight, and his smile is your felicity.

Long for heaven, where your Lord and you shall never be separated, and where you shall see him as he is. In vain shall death forbid your approach to Jesus, for in that flesh which worms shall destroy you shall see God. In vain shall the accuser of the brethren demand your condemnation, for in spite of all his charges he shall see the mercy of the Lord Jesus adjudging you to eternal life. And in vain shall the workers of iniquity try to prevent your separation from them, for it shall be effected by love directed by infinite wisdom, and armed by almighty power.

If there be any before me whose hearts are now complaining, "I sought Jesus, but I found him not," I would say to them, let your inquiries be more hum-

ble, affectionate, and earnest, than they have been, and the promise of God will be verified: "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye search for me with all your hearts." The termination of the solemnity may be more happy to you than its commencement. And however long he may delay his meeting with you, "it is good for a man both to wait and quietly to hope for the salvation of the Lord."

ADDRESS XXXIX.

1 THESS. I 10.

"And to wait for his Son from heaven whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivered us from the wrath to come."

THESE Christians at Thessalonica, were striking evidences of the moral power of the gospel. They had been turned by it from the gross notions, the carnal superstitions, and the gloomy forebodings of idolatry, to the service of the living God, to that atonement by which guilt is expiated, and to a patient waiting for the second coming of our Lord. And I trust that by the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus ye have been brought from the corruption, misery, and peril, of a state of nature, to the feelings, the sanctity, and the hopes of Christians.

Let your meditations be turned to the wrath to which you were exposed, that your gratitude may be heightened to your great deliverer. There are some who, led away by the flatteries of a deceitful heart, or by extravagant views of the divine mercy, reprobate the

idea of God's avenging justice, and stigmatise the representations which are given of it for the most salutary purposes, as the forebodings of a gloomy enthusiasm which loves to excite horror and alarm. But their views of the indulgence and indiscriminate mercy of the Deity are in direct opposition to his justice and purity, and are most pernicious in their influence. If, in the present scene, which was never intended for the full display of divine justice, we see the prosperous villain often covered with infamy, and wretched by remorse, and guilty nations made the tormentors of each other, what must be the case in a future state when the mystery of God shall be finished, and "he shall plentifully reward the proud doer?" Revelation leads us to the side of the pit of destruction, clears away the smoke which issues from it, and gives us a glimpse of those who are dwelling with devouring fire, that we may gladly embrace the salvation which it offers.

How dreadful is the thought that this misery shall never come to an end! The chains of darkness are never unloosed, the devouring worm never dies, and the smoke of torment ascends up for ever and ever. In this world we are visited by few calamities for the removal of which we may not hope. The world may do justice to the reputation which calumny has blasted, health may restore its bloom to the faded cheek, and reconciliation renew the intercourse of interrupted friendship; but while the ages of eternity are rolling, there will still be wrath to come.

None of you, I trust, is saying in his heart, "why are such dreadful contemplations presented to us? if they must be uttered in a Christian assembly, let them be addressed to those only who are enemies to God." The more vivid your impressions of the damnation of hell are, the more fervent will be your love to the Sa-

viour, the more serious and solemn will your spirit be ; and the more rapturous will be your joy in those blessings of salvation to which God, in the riches of his grace, hath brought you.

From this wrath Jesus delivered you. Actuated by the strongest pity, when he saw our utter wretchedness, and the impossibility of relief coming from any hand but his own, he engaged to rescue us by devoting himself to all the anguish of the curse. He assumed our nature, and closed a life of sorrow, which yet was distinguished by every moral beauty, by the death of the cross. Why did the blood stream from every pore of his prostrate body in the garden ? and what made his soul exceeding sorrowful, even unto death ? It would be to dishonour his fortitude, and to degrade his love, to say that this arose from the mere dread of death, which feeble mortals have often defied, or from the ingratitude and cowardice of the disciples, which he foresaw, and generously pardoned ; it was his Father's hand which bruised him, and put him to grief. What opened these lips in complaint on the cross which were sacred to the language of patient submission ? it was because on him were laid the iniquities of us all. Thus was he made a curse for us, " that being justified by his blood, we may be saved from wrath through him."

O what gratitude do you owe to this Deliverer ! You are grateful to the man by whose skilful attentions your life is rescued from the grave to which disease was hurrying you ; but he is only the instrument of the divine beneficence, and relieves you without detriment to himself. The man who delivers a nation from bondage, or from peril, is celebrated in its annals from age to age ; but we cannot compare this deliverance, or the sacrifice of ease, or of life by which it has been at-

tained, to our redemption from utter ruin in soul and in body for ever ; and to those agonizing sorrows by which it hath been accomplished, and which are now to be exhibited in expressive symbols. We must know the power of God's anger, and the intensity of Christ's sufferings, ere we can understand the value of this deliverance, or the love which achieved it.

As a guilty sinner I deserved the pains of hell ; and when my conscience was awakened, I felt its remorse and despair working within me ; and I thought, if the beginning of sorrows is so overwhelming, what must wrath to the uttermost be ? In this dreadful state I sought the Lord Jesus, and he heard me, he washed me from all my sins, and delivered me from all my fears ; and instead of drinking of the wine of the wrath of God from the cup of his indignation, and being tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the Lamb, the children's bread, and the wine of the kingdom are mine :—" I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart, I will glorify thy name for ever more, for great is thy mercy to me, and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell."

After the Service.

Christians, the resurrection of your Lord from the dead, is a proof that the purchase of your deliverance from wrath is completed. If the price of your redemption had not been paid, your Surety would not have been taken from prison and from judgment. But to shew that every demand had been answered to the full, he was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. His Father brought him from the grave, and received him to glory, not in obscurity and silence,

which might have excited the suspicion that the elect were "scarcely saved," but with the splendour and applause of a triumphant conqueror. Come see the place where the Lord lay, and behold in that empty grave a pledge that the prison of hell shall never enclose you; and in these opening heavens, and in that enthroning of your Redeemer, an assurance is given that eternal glory shall be yours. "Ye were by nature the children of wrath, even as others; but God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved you, even when you were dead in sins, quickened you together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places with Christ Jesus." And your Lord will come from heaven, publicly to announce your deliverance, and to put you in full possession of it. The resurrection makes this certain; for it was the first stage of his exaltation, and secures all the rest. It was the solemn fixing of the seal of heaven to his commission to judge the world. As he gave the first, so shall he give the final blow to death and sin; "and your conversation is in heaven from whence you look for the Saviour." Could you wish a judge more indulgent than him who is touched with the feelings of your infirmities, one better acquainted with your circumstances than your advocate with the Father, or one more able to befriend you than the Almighty Saviour? To you the majesty of the judge shall be softened by the compassion of a Saviour; and unrelenting justice to the wicked, cannot indispose him for the language of love, and the exercise of mercy to you. When you shall hear the doom of the wicked, and see them led away into everlasting punishment without a mouth being opened to plead for them, or a hand stretched forth to stay their doom, he shall call you to eternal rest and glory. He thinks it not enough to

save you from misery, but to raise you to fulness of joy, and to pleasures evermore.

Now for this coming of your Lord you must wait. You know his coming is certain ; but it is delayed for the wisest reasons, and you must believe that he will appear at the period fixed by infinite wisdom and love. Wait for his approach in the patient discharge of the duties which prepare for it. Wait for it not in the indolent posture of the sluggard, neither slumber to beguile the time ; but “ let your loins be always girt, and your lamps burning.” Your Lord delays his coming to give you time to finish your course, and it will require every moment that is allotted you, to shew the necessary diligence, “ that you may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless.” To draw back is to draw back to perdition, but to hold on must be your interest, whatever it may cost you, for “ he that endureth to the end shall be saved.”

Fret not that you have no hope of release from present evils. Poverty may oppress you in spite of all your efforts to better your circumstances, and from the furnace of affliction no way of escape may be opened ; but the prison of hell shall not close upon you, and ye shall not fall into the avenging hands of the living God.

Stand in awe and sin not. Indulgence in sin will be the basest ingratitude to your deliverer ; and God may punish it by giving you up to such terrors as will make you the most miserable of all men. I know not a more certain evidence that a man has no interest in this deliverance, than his fancying himself released by it from all need of moral circumspection. The Lord is at hand, be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. Soon shall you have it to say, the next morning which shall dawn upon me, shall be that in which

my Lord shall be revealed from heaven, the next voice to which these ears will listen shall be the midnight cry, " behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him ;" and the next words which I shall speak shall be my account of myself to God. In that hour, O my deliverer, befriend me, or I shall be undone ; and he will befriend you, for to them that look for him he comes to save. The trump of God shall sound, but it will be to announce that your redemption draweth nigh ; the chariots of God will come shining in splendour, but it will be as instruments of deliverance ; the great white throne will be set, but it will be to you a throne of grace ; and heaven and earth shall pass away, but the Saviour will fix you as a seal upon his arm, and keep you in perfect peace.

It often happens that the objects of worldly expectation, when they arrive, produce feelings of disappointment ; but how different are the feelings with which your Lord will be welcomed ? " This is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us ; this is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." O why my soul art thou so cold in thy wishes, so languid in thy efforts, and so sluggish in thy preparations for that day ? I have said, would to God it were morning, yet light hath brought me no healing in its wings. I have waited for the return of friends ; but their altered looks and conduct have told me that they were estranged ; but in my Lord, when he comes, I must be happy, for his power and love are eternal. " Wherefore, gird up the loins of your minds, and be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that shall be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

ADDRESS XL.

2 CORINTHIANS XIII. 14.

“ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.”

THE fulfilment of this benediction would render your present service truly delightful. It would give elevation to your minds, fervour to your worship, and gladness to your hearts. You are accustomed to hear it repeated at the close of public worship; and when I now express this wish at the commencement of your present solemn act of Christian homage, may the love of God be shed abroad in your hearts, the grace of Christ be exceedingly abundant to you, and the Spirit of devotion and peace descend upon you.

In this benediction, you behold the doctrine of the Trinity established. If this doctrine had been an invention of men, and if it had rested on no other support than the curious speculations of Gentile Philosophers, or the vain traditions of the Jews, the Apostle would not have employed language so obviously calculated to form the belief of it in the minds of Christians. It is impossible to reconcile the notion that our Lord is a mere creature, and that the Spirit is only an attribute or quality of Deity, with this benediction, for the most important personal acts are here ascribed to the Holy Ghost; and the grace of Christ is solicited for Christians even before the love of God. In the Lord's Supper you profess a devout regard and adhe-

rence to this doctrine, to the support of which you were pledged in your baptism. Let not curiosity approach it with its presumptuous inquiries, nor unhumbléd reason with its vain explanations; but let prayer draw near to it with ardent requests for the spirit of wisdom; faith, with entire submission to the divine testimony; admiration, with its loftiest wonder; and reverence, with adoring awe. Never let Unitarian blasphemy, or infidel scorn make you ashamed of a doctrine which God hath interwoven with every article of our faith, every rite of our worship, every expectation of our hearts, and every revelation of eternity.

In this benediction you behold the interest which each of the persons in the Godhead takes in your salvation. Each has his peculiar office in the promotion of it; betwixt them there is the most perfect harmony of co-operation; and in the result of the whole, a three-one God shall be all in all. They ought to receive from us equal homage of gratitude and trust; and in the worship of good men on earth, and of the just made perfect in heaven, you are led to this by the most striking examples. And how strange is it that such worship should have been stigmatized as idolatry, by any who profess to bow to the authority of Scripture? But there is as little argument in their reasonings to convince our judgment, as there is of piety in their addresses to the Deity to touch our hearts.

The specimens of Unitarian piety given us in the hymns and prayers published by writers of that party, suggest no favourable view of the influence of their system; and by a heart influenced by the spirit of Christ, they will be read with no complacency. That admiration of the Saviour which diffuses over sacred poetry its noblest charms, breathes not in a single line, and the glories of his cross, and the agency of his Spirit,

are overlooked with contemptuous neglect, and sentiments and feelings incompatible with them are directly avowed.

Amidst all the defects of the English Liturgy, its evangelical tenets and spirit must be admitted ; and its devout and glowing addresses to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are a proof that its framers were aware of the interest Christians have in this doctrine, and that they were not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. There are ceremonies in the worship of that Church which savour of superstition ; but it is only just to say of its Litany, that it is rich in the doctrines of Christ, and glows with the spirit of the gospel ; and in its supplications for mercy from each of the Persons in the Godhead, and its ascriptions of glory to each, the pious and the faithful in all denominations will cheerfully accord.

But you may behold also in this benediction the rich and glorious portion of true Christians. The delights of divine love, the supporters of the grace of Christ, and the influences of the Holy Ghost are yours. The love of God gives joy in every ordinance, makes every dispensation of Providence acceptable, and elevates and strengthens human friendship. By the grace of Christ duty is made easy, trouble light, temptation is repelled, and death is overcome. By the influences of the Spirit bad passions are not suffered to make the saint wicked, nor gloomy feelings to render him miserable ; and by it the holiness that adorns, the peace that tranquillizes, and the communion which blesses the soul, are maintained and perfected.

A good man may be poor ; but with these blessings the evils of poverty will be borne with cheerfulness. He may be scorned and abused by the world, but God is his friend. Men may withhold their aid from him

in difficulties ; nay, may do what they can to aggravate his afflictions, but the power of Christ shall rest on him. Men may separate him from their company, and cast out his name as evil for the Son of Man's sake ; but the communion of the Holy Ghost is a refuge in which the gloom of solitude is forgotten, and the terrors of persecution cannot be felt.

We trust, Christians, that you now feel the most eager desires after these spiritual blessings ; and if you ask them in the name of Jesus, and in reliance on his death and intercession, “ grace shall be to you, and peace from him who is, and was, and is to come, from the seven spirits which are before the throne, and from the faithful witness, the first begotten from the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth.” May you now have fellowship with the Father in his love, with the Son in his grace, and with the Spirit in his fruits and consolations.

After the Service.

“ Truly, O Christians, the lines are fallen to you in pleasant places, and you have a goodly heritage.” Yours is a heritage of which no vicissitude can deprive you, which shall yield you daily new stores of consolation, and blessedness, and whose riches are inexhaustible. When you think how unworthy you are of such a heritage, and what a different portion you once madly sought, it will fill you with devout wonder, that God should have “ made an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.” Shew in your temper and conduct the moral influence of this benediction. Let the love of God excite you to be zealous for his glory, resigned to his will, fearful of offending him,

and solicitous to please him. Let the grace of Christ render you active in duty, firm and vigorous in resisting temptation, and let it repress all confidence in yourselves ; and beware of grieving the Holy Spirit of God, by the vanity of your thoughts, or the carnality of your hearts, or by any fellowship with the works of darkness. You will find, I trust, in this interest of the Holy Trinity in your welfare, your motives and obligations to all holy obedience strengthened, and will show, in your persevering resistance to every temptation to indolence and apostacy, its power over the conscience, and the moral impulse which it gives to the heart.

Let this benediction excite and direct you to frequent and affectionate prayer for those who are over you in the Lord. " I beseech you, brethren, for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me." The more your minister shares in the love of God, the grace of Christ, and the fellowship of the Spirit, the more will you be improved and comforted by his labours.

I call on you also to solicit these blessings in behalf of your fellow worshippers. The wishes of Christian benevolence thus expressed will animate you to all the duties of charity. You will not envy, or defame, or injure the man to whom you wish the love of God ; you will not refuse your support to those for whom you solicit the grace of Christ ; nor will you scorn the society of a brother, because he is poorer and less intelligent than yourself, for whom you ask the communion of the Holy Ghost. Do you wish one another the love of God ? it is a call on you to brotherly kindness in all its forms. Do you wish one another the grace of Christ ? it calls you to help every man his

neighbour, and to say to him be of good courage. Do you wish one another the fellowship of the Holy Ghost? it impels you to say to them, "Come hear ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul." "Come, O ye house of Jacob, and let us walk in the light of the Lord."

With this benediction friends may solemnize their farewell; parents may thus conclude their parting counsels to their children, who are about to leave their dwelling; and the dying may thus express their last wishes for the prosperity of those who shall survive them. In such circumstances, almost every heart feels the deepest anxiety for the welfare of those from whom it is about to be separated, and a consciousness that this only can be secured by the counsels and the protection of the Almighty. In uttering this benediction with the spirit and the voice of piety, a sense of religion may be awakened, and the most favourable impressions of divine things will be associated with all their recollections of the melting scene. Enjoying the love of God, the grace of Christ, and the fellowship of the Spirit, they will not deplore the want of the counsels of a friend, the kindness of a husband, or the care of a father. Let the worldling desire that pleasure may give enchantment to every scene, that wealth and riches may be in their house, and that they may be crowned with glory and honour; in this benediction you will find wishes to be expressed by you, more suited to your character, and much more adapted to make those whom you love happy.

Study this benediction with more attention than ever. It will lead you to the most interesting views of the divine character, and of the privileges of Christians. In it I see the essence of the gospel, and the

whole course of redeeming mercy. It should be inscribed on the table of every heart.

Be careful to show your regard for it in your conduct. Leave not the house of God unless imperious necessity require your departure till it is pronounced, and join in this part of the service of the church with all solemnity. There have been instances in which the minister's voice has been lost while pronouncing it, in the noise made by those who were rushing out of the sanctuary ; and others have been occupied at that solemn moment in preparing for their departure, or for the expression of civility and respect to their fellow-worshippers. Such behaviour is a proof of a vain and worldly mind, of thoughtlessness, and of irreverence. Be it your care to stand in stillness and awe till it is finished, and to accompany it with the earnest wish, " Bless me, even me, also, O my Father !"

Finally, Look forward to the larger measure of those blessings which you shall receive in the heavenly state. There you shall dwell in love ; there the grace of Christ shall reign in your eternal life ; and there the Spirit of glory and of God shall rest on you. With this prospect before you, it becomes you to be patient, steadfast, and active in the service of God ; since such shall be the issue of your labours, and such your portion for ever.

SERMON VI.

Unitarianism a Perversion of the Gospel.

GAL. I. 7.

“ There be some that would pervert the Gospel of Christ.”

THE Galatians had embraced the gospel with the warmest affection. They regarded the preachers of it with high veneration, and delighted in its doctrines as the greatest and most interesting truths which they had ever contemplated. But these transports were not of long duration. When the charm of novelty was gone, they became indifferent to that which had interested them so strongly, and were disposed to adopt very opposite schemes, which were recommended to them by plausible language and insinuating arts. Such versatility of temper, and such instability in principle, were unworthy of them as men, and disgraceful to them as Christians. The apostle was filled with shame and grief on account of their folly, and with a holy displeasure at their fickleness and infatuation, and resolved to write to them to convince and to reclaim them. He knew that, though this was one of the most necessary and useful offices of friendship, it is often attributed to prejudice and hostility by those who are too proud to be blamed, and who imagine that they only are their friends who are disposed to support them in every thing. In order to shew that he had the tenderest solicitude for their welfare, he be-

gins his epistle with the usual expressions of benevolent regard. When these were finished, he expresses how much he was astonished and shocked at their being so soon removed into another gospel; and, in the most solemn manner, invokes the vengeance of heaven on all who should preach any other tenets than the doctrines of the grace of God. He considered the Galatians as deluded by ungodly and artful men, and labours to exhibit their seducers in their true colours, and to give faithful warning against their schemes.

In every age the church has been troubled with such perverters of the gospel, and against them her ministers must maintain "the faith of Jesus." The Socinian heresy, under the title of Unitarianism, has been disseminated of late with great keenness; and though we are far from supposing that it will be received by many, and though we know that you are established in the present truth, yet it may tend to excite and to strengthen your gratitude and your zeal, to shew that this scheme is false and pernicious, and that it is opposite to all that is most valuable in the gospel, and pious in Christian feeling.

Let us consider, in the *first* place, how the promoters of this scheme pervert the gospel of Christ.

1. They wrest the plainest and most direct statements of the gospel. The Deity, and the atonement of Christ, are so clearly stated in Scripture, that the opponents of these doctrines, in order to evade the arguments drawn from such passages, have had recourse to every subtilty and artifice of criticism, by which such texts might be made to bear a different sense. In opposition to the testimony of the best manuscripts, they have asserted that some texts are interpolations, and have insisted on expunging passages from the sacred record which they found it impossible

to bend to their views. In other cases, they suggest such changes in the reading, or in the construction, as may render them less hostile to their creed, or may neutralize their testimony altogether. At other times, they explain texts in a sense most remote from their obvious meaning, regardless how low and frivolous their explication may be, if the obnoxious doctrine is kept away; and by having recourse to the convenient supposition of eastern metaphor, many of the brightest testimonies of Scripture are represented as flights of imagination, which are utterly inadmissible in sober argument. In proof of these assertions, I may state their expunging the first and second chapters of the gospel by Matthew, and their representing the personal qualities and acts ascribed to the Holy Ghost as the language of figure.

Out of many passages which might be adduced to shew how they torture the plainest texts into a meaning quite opposite to the scope of the passage, I shall select the following:—In the beginning of the second chapter of the epistle to the Philippians, in order to recommend humility, Paul states the amazing condescension of our Lord, “who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” The meaning of this passage, Socinians have asserted to be, that Christ did not grasp at divine honours, or seize them as his prey, which is a sense not only unauthorised by the phrase, but directly opposite to the argument of the Apostle. For what humility would there have been in a mere creature, not aim-

ing at equality with the Most High, or declining that to which he had no title.

I may refer also to that text in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever," which some of them insist should be rendered "God is thy throne for ever," though it is contrary to the idiom of the Greek language, and degrades the Deity into a symbol of authority. I shall only mention, as another instance of this perversion, their representing the devout exclamation of Thomas, "My Lord and my God," as the language of unmeaning surprise, like what is common in the world, when any thing striking is heard or seen. But such language would have been censured, not applauded, by his Lord, and to attribute it to this disciple, is insulting to his feelings, as well as his character. Had the advocates of our Lord's Deity supported it by such criticisms, the bitterest sarcasms would have been employed to expose their ignorance and presumption. I will only say, that these passages may well be relied on, since this is all that can be brought to invalidate their testimony, and that a claim to critical ingenuity, can with no propriety be made by any who can avail themselves of such pretexts as these.

The same remarks may be applied to the methods by which they attempt to set aside the plainest statements of our Lord's vicarious sufferings, and represent that death as intended only for an example of patience and courage, which was endured in our room and stead, as the punishment of our crimes, and as the ransom of our souls.

2. They explain away its brightest principles. They boast that they have restored Christianity to its primitive simplicity, and describe its peculiar doc-

trines as the dogmas of scholastic theology, which, in the times of ignorance, were received with superstitious veneration. They assert that they have purified the temple of God from the idols, the rubbish, and the fantastic ornaments which disgrace it; that by the lights which they have opened, they have dispelled its gloom: that by the candour and charity which they have so successfully inculcated, the noise of disputation will soon cease around it, and that Jews and Mahometans, finding no objects of worship but such as they have served in their mosques and their synagogues, will bring into it their honour and their glory. If we examine these audacious pretensions, we will find that what they exclude from the gospel is all that can recommend it as a ground of hope to sinners, and that the doctrines which offend their pride of reason shine with divine wisdom.

It is the brightest glory of Christianity, that it represents God "as so loving the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life." But how low and feeble is the idea of divine love which this language conveys, if we must understand it of the appointment of a mere man to inform us that God will save us on our repentance and amendment? Consider this gift as that of his Eternal Son, to suffer and to die for us, and how great seems his goodness!

The atonement for sin which our Lord made in his death, and his victory over the powers of darkness, are splendid parts of the gospel, and have filled the minds of the pious with gratitude and wonder, from age to age. But how different are their views of the cross of Christ, who assert that no atonement was necessary; that Jesus died as the mere victim of human violence; that there was no more virtue in his death than in that

of a martyr ; and that so far from taking vengeance on the evil spirits by whom man had been deceived and ruined, no such beings exist, and that their agency and their powers are only the fictions of superstitious fear, or of ignorance, misconceiving the language of personification ?

The operations of the Holy Spirit in renewing and sanctifying the souls of men, are parts of the Christian system in which God appears as the source of holiness, and as the gracious restorer of human nature. Goodness appears the child of his care ; and feeble man rises by supernatural aid to higher and more varied excellence than what was lost by the fall. But the Socinian represents the regeneration of man as only a strong figure, expressing that reformation which he can accomplish by his own energy ; these cheering descriptions of the Spirit's abode and influence in the heart, as only the strong colouring of oriental imagery, applied to the emotions of virtue ; and the impressions of aid and consolation from him as the conceit of enthusiasm.

The intercession of our Lord in heaven, is a doctrine truly delightful. To think of a friend in heaven so watchful over our interests, so desirous for a reunion with us, and possessing such sources of aid and comfort for our benefit, is of all contemplations the most cheering to the heart, and the most animating to devotion. But the Unitarian tells us that where Christ now is, and how he is employed, it is presumption to say. How many of our sorrows must be unknown to him, if he is only a man ; and the intercession of a mere creature could not be entitled to such high consideration above that of other saints. From these examples, we are warranted in saying, that if Unitarianism be Christianity, it is Christianity divested of its

distinguishing characters. It is like a body from which the soul hath fled ; like a fountain from which the water of life is gone ; like a temple from which the glory is departed.

3. They pervert the gospel, in the vile misrepresentations which they give of its distinguishing doctrines. It is no difficult matter to make the best character, and the best principles odious, by arraying them in a hideous and disgusting garb. Heretics have employed this artifice, and have exhibited the doctrines of the evangelical school, not as they are held and explained by its disciples, but as they are distorted by their crafty and disingenuous opponents. To candour and integrity every disputant should pay the most sacred regard ; the statements of men's sentiments in speech, or in writing, are entitled to as fair a construction as their actions ; and it is a display of ingenuity the most base as well as the most pernicious, to blacken what is excellent, or to varnish what is odious.

In general, Unitarians represent the evangelical scheme as irrational. They talk of its doctrines as the reveries of scholastic dreamers, which were venerated in the cells of monkery, and maintained by the anathemas and persecutions of the dark ages, but which are now exploded by the power of reason and the progress of science. Thus do they speak of doctrines which men of the noblest faculties have delighted to contemplate, and gloried to avow, and in which reason finds nothing inconsistent with its enlightened dictates, but matter for its loftiest contemplation.

The doctrine of the Trinity, they represent as an avowal that there are three Gods, in defiance of the most express declarations that these three are one. The Deity of Christ, and the honours which we pay

him, they charge with idolatry; and the mystery of the incarnation they deride as a fable. But the worship of Christ is the service of heaven; and the formation of our Lord's human nature, was the noblest of Jehovah's works. They assert that in the doctrine of the atonement we exhibit God as unjust, in punishing the innocent for the guilty, and as a gloomy and vindictive tyrant, whom it is impossible to love; but the voluntary substitution of Christ in our room, was the highest homage which could be paid to divine justice; and it is at the cross of his Son that mercy displays its brightest splendours.

The justification of the sinner by grace, which they accuse as unfriendly to morality, and as flattering the carnal hope that the vilest indulgences may now be practised with impunity, magnifies the law, and binds all who obtain it, more strongly than ever to holy obedience. The eternal perdition of the wicked, they reprobate as a horrid doctrine, which none can maintain but the slaves of prejudice and malignity, while it prompts to the most salutary efforts of beneficence, and operates now, and may operate for ever, in guarding the allegiance of the various orders of intelligent creatures throughout the universe to the Lord of all. I am aware that the denial of the eternity of future punishment is not peculiar to this sect, and that it is rejected by some who are not friendly to their other tenets; but it is evident that in attacking this opinion they have recourse to modes of explaining Scripture adopted by Socinians, and which, if applied to other parts of the gospel, will lead them to reject these also; and it is foolish to expect that they will not, in many cases, be thus employed.

4. They labour to subvert its noblest influence. What are the noblest emotions of the human heart?

They are veneration of his majesty who is Lord of all ; admiration of his beauty and excellence, who is the image of the invisible God ; delight in his presence who is full of grace and truth ; gratitude for the blessings of the cross ; astonishment at the wonders of Christ's dying love ; affectionate reliance on his mercy ; a humble sense of our own unworthiness ; and benevolent devotedness to the best interests of our brethren. Such is the spirit which actuates the celestial worshippers, which swell their song of the worth of the Lamb, and which prompts them to cast their crowns at his feet. No affection to country, to friends, or to kindred, can be compared to such principles. In the excellence of their object, and in the splendour of their influence, they far surpass them ; and when patriotism and natural affection are extinguished in the heart, these will glow with unabated warmth, and will constitute the temper of heaven.

It is evident that our gratitude for a deliverance, and our attachment to a deliverer, will be proportioned to the ideas we have formed of the dreadfulfulness of that state from which he rescued us, the humiliations and sufferings to which he submitted for our sake, and the generous motives which influenced his interposition. These things the evangelical scheme represents in the way most adapted to melt our hearts ; but Unitarians look with no favour on such emotions. They represent Jesus as possessing no excellence of character, but what may be attained by the patient efforts of any sincere and stedfast lover of virtue ; and as suffering no agonies for us but what a righteous man, falling before the wicked, might feel. They speak of the evil of sin in terms which indicate very slight impressions of its malignity, and scoff at the assertion that any sacrifice was necessary for its expiation. It seems their

object to cherish man's confidence in himself, and to brand the language of self-abasement as the whining of hypocrisy. The noblest actings of faith and love triumphing in Christ they view with no complacency ; and when they have judged it prudent to express their opinion respecting them, they have called them the effusions of passion or of frenzy, which the compassionate will regard with pity, and the wise with contempt. How feeble is the idea which their system inspires of the generosity of our Lord, and of the necessity of his interposition ; and slight must be the penitence which their mutilated views of our obligations and demerit can produce.

What are the feelings which have prompted the sacrifice of the martyr ? They have been the strong impression of the divine excellence of his Master, the remembrance of his dying agony, and the hope of being brought by him out of great tribulations, and joined with those " who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." And what is it that supports good men under their afflictions, and enables them, not merely with sweet composure, but with joyful hope, to resign their spirits to the Lord Jesus ? It is their " knowing whom they have believed, and their persuasion that he is able to keep that which they have committed to him against that day."

What are the feelings which have suggested those institutions of mercy which have blessed so many thousands of the unhappy, and which have animated the benevolent to endure toils and pangs in searching out and in relieving the miserable ? They are those which the cross of Christ has inspired. It is well known that it was the principles of the gospel which animated the beneficence, and soothed the affliction of Howard ; and that this was the grand motive which influenced mul-

titudes whose memories are blessed in their labours of love, that they knew “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ—how, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich.” But those who believe not in our Lord’s Deity cannot feel the power of such a motive, and on them its glory is lost. Take them to the contemplation of those dimensions of Christ’s love, in the view of which Paul was filled with astonishment and rapture, and they can see no elevation in its height, no condescension in its depth, and nothing in its breadth or its length which a creature may not comprehend, nay equal. With their views of the sufficiency of reason, and of the depravity of man, we cannot expect from them those efforts to enlighten and convert the heathen in which the benevolence of the gospel finds its brightest triumphs. I may state, that love to our foes, forgiving the injuries they have done us, and overcoming their evil with good, which are universally admitted to be the most difficult efforts of virtue, are most powerfully taught and enforced by the meekness of the Lamb of God—by his prayer on the cross for the salvation of those whom he could have destroyed, and by his dying for enemies; and that to degrade him is to lessen the influence and the glory of his matchless generosity. There is no quality which they attribute more confidently to themselves than charity, and yet it is a charity feeble in its motive, low in its object, and partial in its operation. It is a charity which is shewn in extenuating the errors of men, and not in efforts to rescue them from the bondage of corruption, and to bring them to entire and prompt submission to the Saviour.

5. This scheme opposes the grand end of the gospel. The grand end of the gospel is thus stated by the

apostle Paul : “ The weapons of our warfare are mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” It labours to expose, in the most striking light, the depravity and wretchedness of man, and his utter inability to do aught for his own recovery ; to exhibit the power and grace of Christ as the great agents of salvation, and to represent the Lord Jesus as all in all. But how opposite is the end which Unitarianism proposes ! It palliates human depravity, and represents nothing else as necessary for deliverance from wrath, and the enjoyment of heaven, than repentance for the past, and amendment for the future. It exhibits Jesus as doing nought for our salvation but preaching a future state, and setting us an example in his conduct of the virtues by which a happy immortality may be attained. In the one system, we see Christ bearing the glory, but in the other, man wears the crown as the reward of his own efforts. In the one we see the crown cast at the feet of the Lord Jesus, as an acknowledgment that to him alone the honour of salvation belongs, but in the other, man is taught to glory in his Maker’s presence. In the one, we see an object pursued worthy of the wisdom, the benevolence, and the grace of God ; but in the other, the most magnificent language is employed to describe the achievements of a creature. In the one, we behold a splendid series of types, sacrifices, and predictions, to prepare for the coming of the Lord, to finish transgression, and to bring in everlasting righteousness ; in the other, that series is employed as the harbinger of one who comes for no other purpose than to make known to man what he must do for himself. In the gospel scheme, we be-

hold the mystery of God finished in the solemnities of judgment, in which Jesus will display the omniscience of an infinite understanding, and the majesty of Almighty power ; but in the Unitarian scheme, we see it terminated in no display of qualities by Jesus Christ beyond what perfect humanity possesses, and in the execution of no office for which a mere creature is not fully competent. In [this scheme, judgment appears no demonstration of the Deity, and no triumph of the grace of the Judge ; nay, its solemnities seem intended to display the merits of the creature, and to signalize a sentence which is soon to be revoked in the release of the wicked from misery. In the gospel scheme, grace and glory are held up as the main object ; but in the other, human merit, and the felicity which it procures. In the first, Jesus appears as the sun around which all the planets revolve, in whose light they shine, and to which they all do obeisance ; but in the other, he appears as a star which arose only in these last days, and which, after yielding a partial light, now pursues its path in a region where its influence cannot extend to us, and which shall move only in a subordinate sphere in the firmament of glory : in the former, the Lord Jesus is exhibited as the object of supreme adoration in heaven, and as the Lamb in the midst of the throne as it had been slain ; in the latter, he is represented as possessing no nature but one lower than the angelic ; and his sufferings are stated as having no claim to influence or remembrance above those of martyrs ; but no martyrdom however distinguished by patience, courage, or charity, is celebrated in the songs of heaven, these are all devoted to the sacrifice of Jesus ; and great as the services of angels have been in their ministry to the good, salvation is ascribed to none but to God and to the Lamb.

From this review it is evident that the Unitarian scheme is in direct hostility to the faith once delivered to the saints; and I shall now, in the second place, set before you some of the reflections and counsels which this subject suggests.

Since such is the character of this scheme, it must be viewed with dislike by every man who loves the truth as it is in Jesus. It has been fitly styled "Deism in disguise." The deist is an open enemy, He professes not a respect for the gospel which he does not feel. He comes forth against the friends of Christianity, and challenges them to the combat. He declares that he anticipates the utter subversion of the Christian religion; and though we have seen the carnage, misery, and crimes to which infidelity led in the day of its power, he exults in the idea that the fall of priestcraft and of superstition, as he terms the gospel and its ordinances, is at hand. But the Unitarian is an enemy who generally wears the mask of friendship; and while he accosts the opponents of his scheme in smooth language, as Joab did Abner, it is that he may put them off their guard, and that he may more certainly give a deadly blow. There are times and places in which some of them have given vent to a scurrility which ill accords with their high pretensions to moderation and candour. Whether this proceeds from the increasing zeal of the party, from their construing the liberality which swept away the dormant statutes against them from our code, into an approbation of their tenets; from a wish to gratify the too prevalent relish for invective; or from exasperation at the exposure of their arts, it is too obvious to be denied, and must disgust all the mild and sober disciples of that school. The friends of the gospel must "not render railing for railing," but maintain its doctrines in its

meeke and holy spirit. Though the cause of Christ requires not the wrath of man in any of its forms, yet lukewarmness in it is most criminal. You could not regard with indifference attempts which were made to depreciate the merit, and to lower the character of a friend to whom you felt yourselves deeply indebted, and there can be no friend who should be so dear to us as the Lord Jesus, or whose honour should be so sacred to us as his.

The doom denounced against such false teachers is dreadful; and when we consider the evidence which they resist, and the grace which they abuse, into an argument for our Lord's degradation, we are not surprised that they are represented as "bringing on themselves swift destruction." What will it avail them that they were extolled by men vain in their imaginations for their acuteness and liberality, when the enemies of Christ shall be clothed with shame, while upon his head the crown shall flourish. They shall see the majesty of Jehovah in him whom they described as a person of our own order, feel the power of the Highest in his arm, and the wrath of the God of judgment in his frown. The gospel which they have perverted shall be the rule of judgment, and the Saviour whom they have dishonoured shall be their judge. Then it will be found that the judgment which they have laboured to strip of almost all its solemnity, to reconcile it with their notion of the simple humanity of the Judge, is tremendous beyond any idea ever formed of it; and that the miseries of hell, which they represented as the correction of a Father intended only to reclaim, are the vengeance of incensed Omnipotence, which will never relent, and which can never spare.

Let us pray for such persons, that God may now give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the

truth. Even their hearts, though steeled by the most powerful prejudices, he can melt and subdue. Could we persuade such persons to listen, we would say to them, "Kiss ye the son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way." Let the pride of error be levelled before the cross of Christ, and its blasphemies be succeeded by the language of praise. It is seldom that we hear of the conversion of such persons. They are too wise and good, too satisfied and happy in themselves to feel their need of him "who is made to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," to solicit his grace, or to place on it any reliance; yet of some in these circumstances it is true that they have been converted from the error of their ways, and from them have been heard the loudest ascriptions of glory to God their Saviour. Nothing can exceed the abhorrence which they feel of the tenets and spirit of their former creed, and the gratitude which swells in their hearts to Him in whom the blasphemer hath found mercy.

Let us guard against the tempers and the habits which lead to such errors. Let not any imagine that, by their education and religious connections, they are safe; for some who have been trained in the strictest principles of Calvinism have imbibed them. The pride of reason is offended at the mysteries of the gospel. A system which represents man as so utterly depraved and helpless that Almighty power alone can save him, and which requires the same submission from the learned and the refined as from the poor and the simple, will be regarded with disgust by the vain and the haughty. The love of novelty often leads to the adoption of errors. Superficial thinkers are soon disgusted with what is familiar; and they are easily allured to listen to any thing which promises to excite

and to gratify their curiosity. Such persons are "like children tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine." Men also have been led to the adoption of such errors by a wish to be distinguished for learning and acuteness, and by a superiority to popular views and prejudices. It is supposed by some to be a proof of a feeble mind to be satisfied with the creed of the vulgar, and that the farther a man's opinions recede from it, the more evidence does he give of the vigour and the independence of his mind. It is to work on this temper that Unitarians labour to swell the catalogue of their adherents with every name of eminence in the literary or religious world; and though no party declaims so much against deference to human authority, none has boasted so much of the learning and worth of its advocates, or has availed itself of such pretexts to question the sincerity of distinguished friends of the gospel.

Partial views of the character of God, and slight views of the evil of sin, have led men to these errors; for he who believes not the infinite evil of sin, will perceive no necessity for the crucifixion of the Lord of glory to expiate it, and he who considers the Deity as all mercy, will imagine no satisfaction to be requisite to his justice. Beware, then, of leaning to your own understandings. "Ask for the old paths, and the good way." Remember that God declares, after the brightest character of his mercy ever heard by mortals, his strict and inflexible justice, and that talents far nobler, erudition more extensive, and inquiries more elaborate, have been consecrated to the honour of the Lord Jesus, than ever were employed to degrade him.

Let the genuine disciples of Jesus bless God that they have been preserved from such fatal delusions. "By grace ye stand." Never forget what you felt

when under the horrors of conviction. No merit of any creature could then have engaged the feeblest of your hopes, and no mercy of theirs could then have imparted to you the smallest consolation. And, in a dying hour, you will find that eternity can only be welcomed, and death overcome, by a spirit which relies on an almighty Saviour. On Him piety rests its last hope, to him it raises its last prayer, to him it bears its last testimony, and with him it leaves all that is dear to it on earth and all its salvation for ever. Be thankful for the able and zealous advocates whom God raises up for the defence of the gospel, and to expose the presumptuous boasts, and the crafty cavils of its enemies; and by the study of their writings, and of the oracles of God, be ready to give a reason of the hope that is in you. Do its adversaries prepare themselves to pervert the gospel, and shall not you give all diligence to maintain it uncorrupted? To perplex the simple, and to silence the ignorant, are no great triumphs; yet by these the adversaries of the gospel try to promote their cause. Recommend your principles by the superior purity and usefulness of your lives. While they boast of their candour and charity, let it be your care to practise them; and while they associate your tenets with the blindness, the sourness, and the fury of false zeal, exhibit them in connection with a pleasing gentleness, and with a persuasive wisdom. The doctrines of the gospel never appear to such advantage as in their moral influence, and their fitness for preparing us for the purity, the worship, and the love of heaven. Carefully improve every observance of the Lord's supper for confirming your faith in the great principles of Christianity. It is there that you "perceive the love of God towards you, in that he laid down his life for you." It is there that you shew forth the Lord's

death, that you see “the steps of majesty, of your God and your King,” that you taste that the Lord is gracious, and that you dedicate yourselves to his service. If you observe it with the devout affections and wishes which become you, such displays of his power and grace and glory will open on your minds as will call forth the loftiest homage of evangelical devotion.

Finally, Let the unbelieving and the impenitent consider, that whatever they profess, they will be found despisers and rejecters of the Saviour. Your creed may be sound, but your hearts are corrupt. You may call Christ, Lord, Lord; but not doing the things which he says, he will scorn your hypocritical flattery, and will lead you forth with those who have been his open enemies. The eyes of the opposers of the truth shall then be opened; but your wicked habits shall remain unchanged. You shall find, in the worm that never dies, and in the fire that shall never be quenched, that the wrath of the Lamb is insupportable, and that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

But say not in despair, How can I be saved? It is the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, which is appointed to cleanse the soul, and this is the invitation which he addresses to you, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, for I am God, and besides me there is none else.” O give him the glory that is due to his name, by entire trust, genuine contrition, and cordial submission; and ye shall have the witness in yourselves that he is God in the pardon which he grants, the change he produces, and the salvation which he bestows. Amen.

FINIS.





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